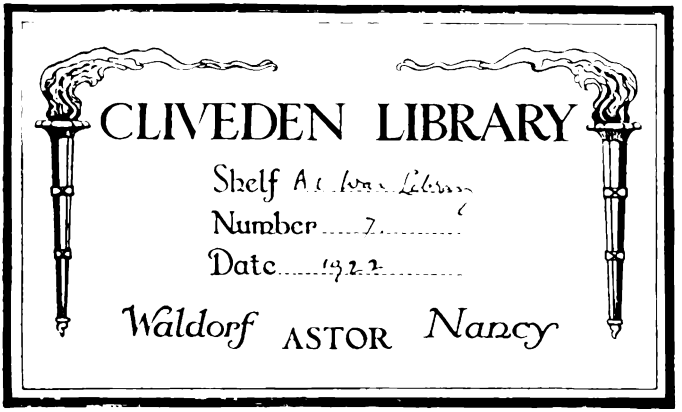
RUSSIA
AT
THE CROSS-ROADS

BY

C. E. BECHHOFER


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RUSSIA

AT

THE CROSS-ROADS

BY

C. E. BECHHOFER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

A. H. MURRAY

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TO

Mr A. R. ORAGE

EDITOR OF *THE NEW AGE*

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INTRODUCTION

In the following pages an attempt has been made to explain Russia not only to the rest of the world but to herself. The supposition has too readily been made that Russia's policy, both external and internal, has been the fruit of deep-laid schemes of conquest or of autocracy. The author of the present work, with a good deal of daring and most commendable originality, challenges this conception, which, he believes, has imposed as much upon Russians as upon their neighbours; and endeavours to prove that all the while Russia has been an enigma to herself no less than to us. Of such an attempt it would be rash to expect that its success must be equal to its courage. On the other hand, so momentous are the issues now hanging in the balance, both from our alliance with Russia, and from Russia's alliance with ourselves, that almost any competent opinion

must be of value. Having spent an arduous year in Russia, examining at first hand, and with the aid of the language and of Russian friends to whom he had introductions, the author, it must be admitted, is at least as well equipped for judgment as most of the English writers on Russian affairs. The majority of English writers, indeed, appear to many of us (myself as a professional student of social economics among them) to have shirked the really important aspects of their problem, and to have given us rather travellers' tales than the conclusions of practical students of international politics. None of them, if we except such English writers as were once Russian—if the remark may be allowed of Professor Vinogradoff and Prince Kropotkin—has at any rate ventured into the domain of counsel and of prophecy. It is in this department, therefore, that the present work appears to me of considerable value. Here, to be taken or rejected, but plainly and boldly stated, are a competent and sympathetic student's opinions of a chief problem of modern Europe. That the work is timely nobody will deny; for now, in particular,

the perennial problem of Russia's landlocked position has emerged into the fullest glare of war-light, so that none can pass it by. Russia is at the cross-roads; and we may add this: Europe is at the cross-roads with her. Here in the following pages is a clear direction-post.

A. H. MURRAY.

THE HAMLET OF THE NATIONS

CHAPTER I

THE HAMLET OF THE NATIONS

THE chief characteristic of Russia is that it is a land-locked empire.

This is all the more extraordinary when one considers its vast size. With its colonial dominions, it is about one hundred and fifty times the size of England and Wales, twice the size of all Europe, and comprises a sixth of the inhabited world; yet it has practically no direct communication, by land or sea, that is not at the mercy of its neighbours. This chapter is intended to show how this lack of a secure outlet has affected Russia's political and economic, and even psychological, conditions.

Let us imagine a Russian stationed in Moscow attempting to envisage the geographical features of his country. Of course, were Russia no larger than an ordinary European nation, were even Russia in Europe the sole

object of his consideration, the lack of means of communication would prevent him having a close personal knowledge of the lie of the land. But we will suppose our observer to possess a fairly accurate notion of the chief features of the country. Two ways of egress not dominated by foreign nations would suggest themselves to him—Archangel and Vladivostock. Archangel, however, is as far from Moscow as the Orkney Islands from London, and, even under the best conditions, a port on the Arctic Ocean has few facilities for ocean trade. Vladivostock, again, is more than five thousand miles away, and the suggestion to use it as a port for European products would be as absurd as to assure a Frenchman that Cape Town would suit his purpose for Mediterranean trade.

Our Muscovite, then, returns to the contemplation of less remote regions. Petrograd, he may think, is what it has been claimed to be, a "window to Europe." Two hundred years ago, Peter the Great built it with this aim on the Finnish marshes at the mouth of the Neva, and removed the administration from

Moscow. At the same time he established a navy to maintain the new capital and set about forcing commerce up from the southern provinces to the north. So far as commerce naturally flows into the Baltic, it comes rather by the basin of the Southern Dvina to Riga, which port has actually a larger export trade than Petrograd. But the portion of the Baltic Sea that touches Russian territory is as a rule frozen over in the winter months. Besides this, the sea is practically landlocked, the only egress being by the narrow straits commanded by Denmark and Sweden. Thus, the old criticism that the "window to Europe" is too often obscured by frost flowers is joined to the mishap that it looks only upon a corridor.

It has often been said that Peter the Great's attempt to force commerce northwards was against the stream. The metaphor is all the more correct when we consider the importance of the Russian waterways as carriers. Distant Archangel owes its existence as a port to its situation at the mouth of the Northern Dvina, which, however, is completely frozen over for half the year. Into the Baltic Sea flow the

Neva, the Southern Dvina, reaching it at Riga, and the Vistula which, though it is the chief commercial highway of all Poland, has its mouth in German territory, by Dantzig, and thus its economic use to the lands about its source is limited. But the largest and most important rivers of European Russia flow southward. There is the Dnieper which flows from the north-west of Moscow through all the rich western provinces by way of Kiev and the "Black Earth," and falls at last into the Black Sea near Odessa. Further west still is the Dniester, serving what are from our Muscovite's point of view the cis-Carpathian provinces of Bessarabia. Then there is the Don, carrying the produce of the central portion of the Black Earth, the rich belt of land on which Russia's agricultural as well as mineral wealth mainly depends, into the Sea of Azov and so into the Black Sea. Further to the east is the Volga, the largest river in Europe, which, navigable for two thousand miles, flows through the central and eastern country as far as Astrachan, where it falls into that huge and economically important inland lake, the Caspian Sea. In

its course it catches the colonial produces of Siberia on their way to Europe, a convenience which will be incalculably extended, when the great waterway is connected with the network of rivers and canals that acts as carrier to Siberia.

In spite of the extraordinary remoteness of their mouths, the Southern Dvina, the Dnieper and the Volga all have their sources in the Valdai Hills, and form with their tributaries and canals the skeleton of a system of waterways which with future development will act as an efficient national carrier internally. But whether the tendency of commerce is to float to the north into the Baltic, or to drop south into the Black Sea, neither course provides Russia with an outlet to the world. The Black Sea, besides its utility as a clearing-house for the agricultural produce of the interior, is also the only centre for the export of the vast mineral wealth of the Caucasus. But here again the only outlet, the Dardanelles, is in the hands of Russia's ancient enemy, Turkey. The result for the world at large is that the exploitation of Russia's wealth,

agricultural and mineral, remains comparatively unencouraged. There is no incentive for Russia to develop her resources, when she has no secure means of conveying them to the world's markets. The present situation, in which a single enemy has blockaded the outlet both from the Baltic and from the Black Sea, illustrates by the light of war what might happen at any time. The risk and uncertainty, even in peace time, are too unsettling for calm and calculated development to commend itself to the Russians. If the world wishes to profit by Russia's natural wealth, it is from Russia's point of view only a fair bargain to give her a road to the markets. By this road she must have secure passage, for not otherwise will the exploitation of her soil repay her.

If our Russian comes to examine the matter further, he soon finds that Russia's desire to have an unimpeded entrance into the outer world has coloured the whole course of her history. Ethnologists have shown that a Balkanic people passed over the Carpathians into what is now called the Russian plain, and dispossessed and to a certain extent mingled

with the aboriginal Finnish tribes, while sweeping them aside to the east and west. There seems also to have been an admixture of Scandinavian elements. The settlers split up into numerous princedoms and republics. They were unable to offer any combined and effective resistance to the raids of the Golden Hordes, who in the thirteenth century overran the country, and swept past into Central Europe; but in course of time the Mongol conquest had the effect of welding all the clans together. When the first impetus of the invaders subsided and their centre was again withdrawn into Asia, the command of the west was left in the hands of three Khans, at Kazán, Astrachan and in the Crimea. These appointed the princes of Moscow to collect dues and enforce obedience from the other vassals. In this way the Muscovites acquired authority, and soon a well-cemented league came into existence under their headship. By skilful diplomacy Ivan III, who reigned from 1462 to 1505, played off the three Khanates against each other and finally drove out the remnants of Mongol power back

into Asia. At the same time, the foundations of the Siberian colonies were laid. Moscow began to be known as the "third and last Rome" in succession to Constantinople, which had fallen to the Turks, and found its rising power faced on the European side by a wall of enemies. In the north there were the Swedes, in the west Poland, the two connected by the armies of the Livonian league. Further south were the outlaw Cossacks of the Ukraine. From Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584) to Peter the Great (1672–1725) the history of Russia is one long struggle against its neighbours. These also had their conflicts. Lithuania was soon split up between Sweden and Poland. At one time the Poles overran both Muscovy and the Ukraine, but eventually they were driven out. By the battle of Poltava (1709), Peter the Great destroyed the hopes of the Swedes and subjugated the Ukraine. But this meant no more than the safeguarding of the Russian Empire by the establishment of a wall of buffer states. The neighbours were different, but just as determined to hem in Russia from contact with the outer world.

The Turks stood over the Balkans and the outlet of the Black Sea, and resisted any attempt to advance in Asia Minor; the Persians barred the way to the Persian Gulf and India. Sweden remained hostile, though the operations were more restricted; behind Lithuania and Poland came Austria and the Germanic states, all quite prepared to accept Russia as an ally, but equally determined to allow her no toll-free passage into Europe.

The middlemen soon became the masters and Russia became more and more the economic handmaid of her neighbours. As Siberia is to her, so she became to her western neighbours. The hated Germans held one side of the bridge into Europe, and the condition by which Russia received the privilege to take part in the world's markets was the gradual control of her activities by Germans. The Russian crown passed to a Germanic prince; the German schoolmaster got abroad and his commercial countrymen followed him throughout the land. The profitable policy of treating the Russians as a subject race was main-

tained by all the parasites that swarmed across the border. There was no escape for the Russians, no way out from their difficulties. The Russian emperors and ministers became privileged spectators of the internal economic struggle and, tempering their Teutonic racial sympathies with the ready money of French financiers, waited in more or less enforced inactivity for better times.

The aim of all governments is to preserve the balance of power as a condition for furthering their own, in their internal, no less than their foreign politics. This policy duly modified the activities of all the Russian emperors and, despite the great dissimilarity in their ideals and temperaments, reduced them all in course of time to a certain type of administration. They had to hold the balance between two conflicting attitudes which have always been the main political divisions in Russia. The parties are known as the "Westerners" and the "Slavophils." Broadly speaking, the continual aim of the former was to remodel Russia as far as possible upon the nations of Western Europe, while the Slavophils, as their name

denotes, preferred the natural characteristics of their native country to any outside influences.

Looking back now, we can see the significant point of difference between them. The Westerners, with their desire to introduce the civilisation of Western Europe into Russia, were unconsciously offering to exploit their country to the advantage of the foreigner. The Slavophils, on the other hand, by their efforts to retain Russia for Russians only, were bound, for want of an effective outlet by sea, to acquiesce in every form of reaction and prejudice. But neither side was so nice in its reasoning, and relied to a large extent on sentimental arguments.

The Westerner put his case somewhat in this fashion: "Russia is weak and oppressed because she has not developed herself as other European countries have. Instead of organising her constitution on a sound liberal basis, and developing her agriculture and industries by building canals and railways and docks, she has stuck in the mire of old fads and customs, and either not progressed at all or allowed the

more alert Europeans to come in and take control."

The attitude of the Slavophils might be expressed in this manner: "Why should we trouble to organise our state and our wealth when we have no means of utilising them for our own benefit? If progress on western lines means the introduction of the horrors of western life into our peaceful countryside, we are better without it. Machinery, machine-slaves, the poverty, dirt and vice of great cities, the transformation of the simple peasant into a slum proletarian—this is what industrial development means. Red riot and revolution, the Terror, Napoleon—this is the result of political development. Far better for us to live under the secure shelter of an autocracy, in a poor land of villages and forests, than in the midst of the social horrors of the west. We cannot mould our country as we desire; we have no organisation, no capital, no commerce save by the permission of the neighbours who hold our paths into the world. And they will not let us progress, except in the way they desire."

The reaction of this may be traced upon

the psychology of the Russians. Imagine our Muscovite looking round the mighty empire for a path to the outer world. All closed, and by enemies. He knows its vastness and wealth and latent possibilities. He knows that, were its development unconditioned by alien influences, it could in course of time stand alone, satisfying all its own needs and economically independent of the rest of the world. This knowledge gives him a sense of unique power and grandeur. But the frustration meanwhile of his attempts to give the world what he has to give atrophies his practical qualities. The reaction comes, his goodwill to serve the world is thrown back upon its centre and turns to egoism; he begins to see a mystic purpose in his solitude, renounces the inhospitable world and becomes an obscurantist Slavophil.

This accounts for what in the Russian character has so often been confused with Oriental fatalism. The fatalist is so from philosophy, but the Russian's despair is the creation of necessity. There is so little Asiatic blood in European Russia, except in the few

surviving Tartar communities on the sites of the old Khanates, that it would be very remarkable if any Asiatic traits were to be found. As for Siberia, the proportion of Russians among the population there is actually larger than in European Russia. The nightmare of Russia's solitary confinement has actually led to a kind of melancholy madness that sooner or later overtakes the most optimistic reformers. It is noteworthy that the most emphatic Slavophils were converts from liberalism. Would it be thought that Dostoievsky had been condemned to death in his youth for a revolutionary conspiracy, when he demands for Russia love and admiration "which cannot be understood by reason, but which are a matter of faith?" Another converted Westerner was Chaädáev, who said: "The nations of the west envy us, and, if they knew us better—if they could see how happy and prosperous we are—they would envy us still more. We ought not, however, to withdraw from Europe our solicitude; its hostility should not deprive us of our high mission of saving order and restoring rest to the nations;

we ought to teach them to obey authority as we do. It is for us to introduce the saving principle of order into a world which has fallen a prey to anarchy. Russia ought not to abandon the mission that has been entrusted to her by the heavenly and the earthly Tsar."

Alexander I, the pupil of La Harpe (who also recanted) is another illustration. On him rested the hopes of contemporary liberalism, but, as soon as he came to a realisation of his position, he completely renounced his earlier ideals and became finally a religious obscurantist. Even the notorious Kátkov, whose writings absolutely defeated the rising liberal movement of the nineteenth century, and who has come down to us as the personification of reaction, had in his youth been a partisan of the reformers. Gogol, the cynical observer, the witty liberal, died of starvation, stretched in the snow before a shrine in Moscow, repudiating all his works.

The case of Gogol is similar to a more recent and better known example of the melancholy egoism that has come over Russia. What else but this key explains the extra-

ordinary change in Tolstoi's life? The most applauded, the most successful writer of his time, Tolstoi suddenly renounced his art and reduced the scope of his intellect to that of a village priest. All Tolstoi's mysticism, as it is called, was nothing but goodwill drawn back into melancholy egoism.

As typical as the unproductiveness of Gogol and Tolstoi in the moods of their later years is the undeveloped condition of Russia to-day. Denied a secure outlet, Russia has fallen into a state of sulkiness. In consequence a sixth of the available territory of the world remains almost unproductive. Optimists may say, with Gorchakov, "Russia is not sulking, she is meditating"; they may try to show that Russia is like a young god, waiting for such an impulse as is hoped from this war, to take birth in Europe as a great nation. But besides the national goodwill, which has never been wanting, there is one condition essential to the development of Russia.

If there is ever to be any hope of a healthy and productive national existence for Russia, it will be her re-establishment on a normal

national axis. Moscow, not Petrograd, is the true centre of Russia. All her healthy life flows from the centre, not from the experimental port in the north. The restoration of the capital to Moscow will be the reflection of the vital renaissance of Russia. But this predicates the attainment of the one great national necessity, her proper and normal path to the world—the security of the Dardanelles.

The price the world pays for the maintenance of Turkey in Europe is the sterile melancholy of Russia.

THE RUSSIANS AS THEY ARE

CHAPTER II

THE RUSSIANS AS THEY ARE

THE political characteristic of the land-locked Russian Empire is its process of becoming a nation. A consideration of this must precede an examination of the national divisions.

We have seen how Russia came to attain her present proportions. We shall now inquire how her conquests have determined her population, and to what extent the neighbours who have been transformed from foes into a wall of buffer states have become Russianised. These are, in Europe, Finland, Poland, the Ukraine and the various Slav, Germanic and Finnish peoples of the Baltic Provinces; in Asia, the tribes of northern Siberia and, in the south, the Central Asiatic descendants of the Mongol hordes; in Asia Minor, there are the Georgians and the Caucasian mountaineers. Besides these there are in Russia a certain number of

Jews, Armenians and Tartars. All these may be divided into three categories: those that are completely Russianised and absorbed; those that have resisted all attempts at absorption and are likely to receive autonomy within the Empire; thirdly, those whose destinies are still too obscure for their future to be predicted.

There is one people which has now become so closely linked with the Muscovite Russians that the original relation in which the two stood has become a purely academic matter. These are the Ukrainians, or Little Russians, of the Black Earth and the south. They were, as we have seen, overthrown as an organised nation at the battle of Poltava. Representing the original type of the early Slav colonists they are distinguished by their quiet nature and swarthy appearance from the more venturous Muscovites, who are broadened in temper and looks by Finnish, Scandinavian and other alien influences. There are several reasons why the Little Russians have been absorbed in the main stock.

In the days of their independence as a fighting people ranging the steppes, they never

possessed any real civil organisation. They welcomed fugitives from the north; adventurers also from regions so far away as Ireland were numbered among them, and the names of O'Brien and O'Rourke are still found. The Ukrainians had a purely martial organisation, and as they were situated precariously between the Muscovite Russians, the Poles and the Turks, they put themselves indifferently under the protection of any one of these and carried on war with the others. The rapid rise, however, of Muscovite power soon put the Ukrainians in difficulties. In 1654 they made an alliance with the Russians, humiliating to themselves inasmuch as the Russian ambassadors refused to guarantee Ukrainian independence. Soon afterwards, under the leadership of Mazeppa, the Ukraine broke the treaty and joined the Swedes, but, with the defeat of Charles XII at Poltava, it came under Russian rule as a conquered nation. Whatever dissimilarity there really was between the two stocks had been exaggerated by their different ways of life. When the Ukrainians came to settle down, there was found to be very

little difference between them and their Great Russian neighbours. Both were of the same main stock and there was no small number of Muscovite outlaws in the Ukrainian ranks. Both belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. The speech was as similar as Wessex English and Yorkshire English; the Great Russian language was far more developed, while the Ukrainian was sprinkled with Polish. Cultured Ukrainians have never found any difficulty in using either as their medium, and the writings of Gogol show us what a Ukrainian can achieve in Russian. Though the difference between the Great and Little Russians is really less marked than that between the English and Scotch, we may use the latter as a handy comparison. As in all important matters the Scotch and the English are politically indistinguishable, so the Little Russians are treated identically with the Great Russians, and the activities of the "Mazeppinists," as they are called, to regain independence for the Ukraine, may be compared with the insignificant propaganda to re-establish Scottish independence. Two conditions qualify the comparison. The

agitation of the Mazeppinists is explained to a certain extent by the unnecessarily provocative attempts of the Russian bureaucracy to forbid the teaching of Ukrainian language and literature in schools ; on the other hand, there is no doubt that much of the agitation is encouraged by Austrian intrigues. Actually, as the present writer is convinced after sympathetic research and inquiry in the Ukraine itself, the people with a very few fanatical exceptions has absolutely no desire to break away from the present union. This is not to say that the Ukrainians have lost consciousness of their history, but simply that they find themselves tolerably content to remain integral parts of an empire with a people similar to them in race, manners, customs and religion.

The Tartar descendants of the survivors of the three Khanates come into the same category. They have for so many generations owed allegiance to the Russian throne that, since they have the same privileges as all the other subjects, they have become entirely absorbed in the Russian nation. They are, however, numerically insignificant and confined to certain

districts. They are mostly Mahomedan and do not intermarry with other Russians.

As peoples in the Empire whose future is uncertain, may be mentioned the nations of the Caucasus and of the Baltic Provinces, the Central Asiatic tribes of Bokhara and Khiva, and the quite uncivilised nomads of northern Siberia. The isolation of the last makes their political future a matter of indifference to the world at large. The Mahomedan and semi-Mahomedan peoples of Central Asia live peaceably under Russian occupation and the fraternising instincts of the Russian settlers may in course of time bring about a certain degree of uniform national consciousness.

In the Caucasus the mountain tribes are at present incapable of civil organisation. The Armenians have a particular national ritual of Christianity and the attempts of various European churches to gather them into their fold have attracted attention to the Armenians out of proportion to their political or cultural importance. The Turks have the best of reasons for distrusting them, and it may be said without prejudice that no European nation

would ever give them the consideration they now enjoy, were it once faced with the practical problem of maintaining authority over them. They are notoriously, in small and in the mass, unprincipled and treacherous. The Christian half of the Georgians has lately revived certain national sentiments and, in 1905, a short-lived Georgian republic was declared at Kutaïs, the ancient Phasis. The pronounced Turkish sympathies, however, of the Mahomedan Georgians necessitate a careful military administration of the southern Caucasus, which at present renders difficult any official recognition of Georgia as a national unit.

There is a similar difficulty in the Baltic Provinces. German influence is strong among the landowning families, and many of them are represented both in the Russian and the German governments and armies. The country is so important as a buffer between the Central Powers and the main Russian Empire, as well as for its seaboard and intrinsic wealth, that the Russian military control can be safely relaxed only to a very slight degree. Under these circumstances the interests and aspira-

tions of the lesser peoples of the region, the million Letts, who are Lutheran Slavs, the million Lithuanians, who are Roman Catholic Slavs, and the less than a million Esthonians, who are Lutheran Finns, have to be subordinated to larger imperial considerations. From their position between two empires, these nations are doomed to perpetual dependence.

In all the instances we have mentioned of peoples unlikely to receive independent autonomy, either because they are already absorbed in the main Russian nation or from their geographical position, there is every reason to think that in course of time some measure of national self-government will be established. The distinction between this and the political autonomy we are about to mention in the cases of Finland and Poland is, broadly speaking, the difference between the present administration of Scotland and Wales and that which is due to come about in Ireland.

Before Finland and Poland are dealt with, brief mention may be made of the Jewish problem. While it is impossible not to sympathise with the hardships and sufferings of

the Jews in the Russian Empire, their two main grievances must be carefully distinguished. These are the Pale and the pogróms. The borders of the Pale are a sieve through which only the most Russianised elements of the Jews may pass. It is an active, but not a persecuting, anti-Semitic measure. We saw in the last chapter that the main political aim of the Russian bureaucracy is to mark time until, by obtaining an outlet to the world by the secure use of the Dardanelles, the Russians will be able to develop their own country without playing into the hands of their neighbours. At present the exploitation of Russia by the Russians is little encouraged; still less are foreigners favoured. The Central Asiatic provinces, indeed, are entirely closed to all foreigners in order that whatever development takes place there—and the permanent Russian home market gives an incentive to production—may rest in the hands of Russians only. For such reasons the Pale has been instituted and a Jew who has not become largely Russianised, by a good professional

education, for example, is treated in economic matters as a foreigner. The Pale is, from the Russian point of view, a sound institution. While the much greater question of economic outlet remains, the problem of the Pale, which is purely economic, must rest in abeyance. On the other hand, the pogróms are indefensible brutalities, detested by every decent Russian community; they are, however, extremely obvious channels for the occasional mob outbreaks which are one of the symptoms of Russia's melancholy, and it is not surprising that bureaucrats have often encouraged pogróms to divert attention from themselves. The proportion of Jews in schools and universities is standardised and kept low. Intermarriage between Orthodox Russians and Jews is forbidden by the Church.

We now come to the countries that seem likely to be autonomous parts of the Empire. These are Finland, already fairly well provided with a constitution, and Poland, under promise of the same privilege. The world is not much concerned with Finland. From her position she has to be subservient either to

Sweden or to Russia. Each nation has ruled her in turn; the balance is at last in Russia's favour and, beyond the necessity of being in a position to thwart any Swedish or other alien influence, Russia has no incentive or desire to remove Finnish privileges. Typical of these are an annually elected Diet of two hundred members and a monetary payment in lieu of military service. Of much greater interest is the future of Poland.

Poland is a country which, by its geographical position as the most central Slav people in Europe and its early adoption of Roman Catholicism, has acquired a culture in some respects superior to that of Russia. On the other hand the fact that it is mainly an inland nation has always put it at a great disadvantage with its neighbours. Its skill in diplomacy and arms made it master at some time or other of large tracts of their territories, but the essential instability of its position led finally to its overthrow and tripartition. This national element of brilliant insecurity is obviously reflected in the Polish character.

So great is the force of Polish culture that Russia has quite abandoned the idea of absorb-

ing Poland into the Russian nation, as the Ukraine has been absorbed. But what political freedom can be obtained depends on equivalent economic freedom. There are now two main markets for Polish products. One is in Russia and, at present, is the more important. The other is the European market, the carrier for which is the Vistula, flowing to the Baltic Sea. The fact that German territory contains the mouth of the Vistula gives Germany the control of that route, and this for the present has not only delayed the independence of Poland, but has forced Russia to exercise a firm control, lest the German economic influence should subvert Russian authority. If, as a result of the war, the mouth of the Vistula falls into the hands of Russia, no other nation will be in a position to threaten her control in Poland. As a result she will be able to grant Poland the autonomy without which the two nations cannot live at peace. Poland has often been compared with Ireland, and it is probable that there will be a great similarity in the future political history of the two.

All that we have said up to this point shows that Russia is not yet homogeneous; con-

sequently, that the inhabitants of such areas as are not yet completely absorbed do not come under the general distinctions we are about to make. For our purpose, the Russian nation consists of the Great, Little and White Russians, and these, with the less important absorbed communities, make up about three-quarters of the whole population of the Empire, and correspond, significantly enough, to the strength of the Orthodox Church.

Let us begin by saying that all Russians are not equal.

The two classes with the most clearly defined privileges and qualifications are the nobles, about one in a hundred of the population, and the peasants, who make up four-fifths of the whole. Between these are the clergy, of relative unimportance as a class, and the burgesses. Until the rise of European capitalism, the existence of the bourgeois middle class was scarcely perceptible in Russian politics. These were concerned almost entirely with the relations between the nobles, who owned the land, and the peasants, who worked on it.

There are hereditary nobles and life nobles.

Besides the rank that attaches to every child of an hereditary nobleman, certain ranks in the national services carry with them automatically the privilege of personal nobility for life; still higher ranks carry hereditary nobility. There is theoretically nothing to prevent a peasant or a burgess entering government service and becoming a noble, but actually, owing to the system of nominations, which extends throughout the services, and to the establishment of many privileged military and civil preliminary colleges for the sons of hereditary nobles only, it is extremely rare for anyone, not born a noble, to attain that rank. Another reason for this must be looked for in the zealous organisation of the nobles themselves for the retention and safeguarding of their privileges. The nobles of every administrative district form a society and elect one of their number as "Marshal of the Nobility." He is recognised by the government and by virtue of his position becomes a feudal official, holding, for example, the position of president of the local Zemstvo, or provincial assembly. Similarly, in electing representatives to the Zemstvoes

and the Imperial Council and the Duma, the nobility are allotted what is usually a preponderating proportion of the seats. Nobles have numerous legal advantages above the rest of the population. All this follows from the power they possess as the landed gentry of a country so largely agricultural as Russia. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century they were the only class with whom European culture was concerned.

That other feudal caste, the peasantry, has suffered considerable changes in the last years. From the Middle Ages till 1861 they had been, for the most part, serfs, owing allegiance not to any central power but to the local squire, on whom also was laid their maintenance in times of famine. With the abolition of serfdom in 1861 the system of the village commune was nationally recognised. By this the land allotted to each village by the assessors from the squire's estates was made over officially to the villagers, who became collectively responsible for the payment of taxes. At the same time the peasants, holding the land in common, were now bound by law to make periodical redis-

tribution of it and to work on it. The communal system was not introduced at the abolition of serfdom; it is an ancient Russian institution, but this was the first national recognition of it. In 1907, however, another most momentous change was introduced. The peasants received the right to claim as their own possession the portion of the communal land allotted to them at the last division. The result was that many peasants claimed their land, sold it and, when the proceeds disappeared, wandered into the towns with nothing to sell but their labour. This led to the establishment of a labour market and the strengthening of one of the prime necessities of capitalism—a proletarian class. Although from 1907 till now very few of the peasants have used their new right, the number is increasing. The bourgeois occupies an insignificant position in Russian history. He always existed as a merchant, but his importance was purely functional. As commercial development increased, merchant guilds were formed, graded according to the wealth of their members and holding certain recognised privi-

leges. With the rise of capitalism, the organised power of the class grew, and the moment came at last when it definitely challenged the old predominance of the nobles. The abolition of serfdom and the revolution of 1905 represent the passing of Russia from the feudal to the capitalist period. Russian capitalism indeed has not yet the importance of British capitalism — the commerce of the Russian Empire is indeed not a tithe that of the British Empire—but its political influence is no longer inconsiderable.

These economic developments are seen particularly clearly in a political body like the Duma. In the parliaments of all developed countries the representatives of the three economic factors—land, capital and labour—are found in the proportions determined by their organised power. As a rule the conservatives stand for the nobility and land; the socialists represent the peasantry and labour; while between them are the liberals, representing capital, and endeavouring to mould the constitution to the needs of capitalist development. All the parties have their two wings. There are the

extreme conservatives and the extreme socialists, but there are also the moderate conservatives inclining to an alliance with capital, as also are the moderate socialists. The representatives of capital have their two wings, one of which inclines to an alliance with the moderate conservatives, the other rather towards the moderate socialists. But the two wings of the capitalist representatives are not so distinct as are the two sections of the conservatives or of the socialists.

The composition of the Duma bears out this economic analysis. There is what is called the extreme Right, representing the most reactionary and obscurantist elements of the nobility. They are the sternest members of the Black Hundred, anti-Democrats, anti-Socialists, anti-Semites, even anti-Parliamentarians to a man. Their chief spokesman has been a notorious reactionary, Pureshkévich, but he is now busy with army supply work, and his place has been taken by the clever and unscrupulous Márkof. The main aim of the party is to obstruct any reforms and to discredit the Duma at every opportunity. During the last session, for in-

stance, there was a proposal to establish a graduated income-tax. In the course of the debate Márkof demanded a huge supertax on large incomes, with the apparent design of getting the whole bill rejected by the higher authorities. The delegates of the Orthodox Church are, needless to say, members of this extreme party. Its chief newspapers are, in Petrograd, *The Bell—Kólokol*—and *The Assembly—Zémshchina*—and, in Moscow, *The Moscow Gazette*, once Kátkof's paper, and now on its last legs.

The moderate Right is a large party representing the more up-to-date landed gentry who are prepared to interest themselves in capitalism. They have an historic parallel in the figure of a Marshal of the Tver Nobility who, in 1857, suggested that, as the care of the serfs in famine years was too great a charge upon the serf-owners, the serfs should be liberated everywhere and the landowners compensated with interest-bearing Government Stock, which capital would allow the landowners to organise agriculture with hired labourers.

The party is known as the "Octobrists";

this name is due to the adoption as their programme of the Imperial Manifesto of October 17th, 1905, which promised large reforms to the nation. For this reason the Tsar once declared that he had been after all the first Octobrist; a cynic approved this with the explanation that the Tsar had promised reforms, but had never sought to carry them out. The leading members of this party, which, as would be expected from the present development of Russian civil life, holds the balance of power in the Duma, are the present president of the Duma, Rodziánko, and the chairman, Gúchkov. The former, a Little Russian by race, is an admirable specimen of the intelligent country gentleman. Attending the tercentenary celebrations of the Románov reigning house in 1913 as the official delegate of the Duma, Rodziánko found he was to be presented to the Tsar only after a long list of officers and bureaucrats. As a protest against this contempt of the Duma, he called his carriage and drove away. Gúchkov is a roving personality of some significance. He fought against England in the Boer War. His

name has often been suggested as the first democratic prime minister of Russia, but he is not popular with any other party. The extreme Right suspect in him leanings towards socialism, while the liberals and socialists doubt his democracy. This confusion probably arises from the dual function of the Duma as the only elective economic and political national body. The Octobrists, as the representatives of the advanced landowners, are bound to be one of the protagonists of the future. A more liberal section of the Octobrists, together with certain small groups of Progressives, form really the right wing of the liberals. They represent the rich people with rather more interest in industrialism than in land, but the dividing line between them and the main body of the Octobrists is very faint. The chief papers of the Octobrist party are the opportunist *New Time—Nóvoye Vremya*—and its evening edition, *The Evening Time—Vechérnoye Vremya*—the dull, respectable *Bourse Gazette*, which resembles our *Daily Telegraph*, and, among the so-called "fat" monthly magazines, is the *Russian Thought—Russkaya Mísl*—

edited by Peter Struve, a publicist whose tendency was far more liberal when he was an exile in Paris.

We now come definitely among the representatives of capital, and a word or two of explanation may be needed. They are nearly all professional men, lawyers, and doctors, and among them certainly are the best brains of the assembly. There are several reasons why the deputies of capital are of this kind. First, they fulfil no productive economic function themselves, and are thus, as a class, professionally concerned in the rise of the artificial element of credit or capital; secondly, only the capitalist class buys brains, and this adds another incentive to them to support it; thirdly, the more liberal among them have an old grudge against the nobles, and in this represent the revenge of the bourgeois for previous contempt; fourthly, these same elements show the typical bourgeois shrinking from the violent suggestions of the socialists and endeavouring to maintain an intellectual middle attitude.

It is natural, since in Russia labour is much less available than land and consequently

more in demand, that the section of the liberals tending towards an alliance with labour should be larger than the section we have already described as constituting their Right wing. The left wing is composed of the Constitutional Democrats, known from the initial letters as the "C.D.'s" or "Cadets." An alternative name for them is the "Party of National Freedom." Their programme is identical with that of the English Fabian Society. Both aim at affording every facility for the capitalist exploitation of the country—a desire which clearly coincides with that of the capitalists. The best known of their members is the capable Professor Milyukóv, who has lectured and written in Western Europe and America. Their papers, as might be supposed, are numerous. There is at Petrograd the official party organ, the daily *Speech—Retch*—notorious for dullness and pedantry. At Moscow there are the two daily papers, the academic and professional *Russian Gazette—Rússkiya Vyédomosti*, and the less scrupulous *Russian Word—Rússkoye Slóvo*—and at Kiev the *Kiev Thought*. Of the "fat" papers the academic, anæmic and

tedious old *Messenger of Europe—Viéstnik Evropi*—belongs to this group. The Moscow Art Theatre may be said to be essentially of this party, just as certain productions in England are essentially Fabian. This Constitutional party, like the Octobrist, is sure to be a protagonist of the future.

We now come to the Socialist parties. The more moderate section of these is the party of the "Trudovícs" or "Workers." They represent the labour of the towns, already reduced to the necessity of selling itself to capital for a wage. Its ideals are not unsimilar to what the Fabian Cadets hope to ensure it—state insurance, for example, and profit-sharing; the real reason, however, for the party's existence is the natural desire of labour to obtain such concessions immediately without the interested intermediacy of the professional classes. The chief intellectual paper of this party is the monthly *Russian Annals—Rússkiya Zapíski*—published at Petrograd.

The extreme section of the Parliamentary Socialists are the Social Democrats, led by fiery Caucasian deputies. These represent the

Socialism of the cry, "Proletarians of all countries—Unite!" Like the Trudovícs they are voluble, and equally impracticable. When, last autumn, the Duma formed commissions upon the army and navy and supplies, both the Socialist parties refused to take part until the whole people should somehow be represented in the inquiries. At the beginning of one session of the Duma, five Social-Democrat members were suddenly arrested for conspiracy and sent to Siberia, in spite of the protests of the remaining Socialists.

There was formerly a vigorous Social-Revolutionary party which at last decided that parliamentary representation was useless for its propaganda and has no more official representatives. It is, however, closely allied with the Social Democrats. Its chief papers are *The Day—Dién*—and the monthly *Contemporary World.*

Analysing the parties of the Duma again in terms of classes, we find that the extreme Right and the Right Octobrists represent the privileged nobles: the Trudovícs and Social Democrats stand for the peasants, while the Pro-

gressives and the Cadets watch the interests of the industrialists. We may now proceed to examine the nature of the wealth on which the Russian capitalist has designs.

THE WEALTH OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER III

THE WEALTH OF RUSSIA

WHILE the economic resources of Russia are practically illimitable, at the same time we observe on all sides signs of strangulation.

It will be sufficient to run through the chief resources of the Empire. The main plain of European Russia, especially the rich Black Earth, is mainly agricultural, and produces enormous crops of cereals. Hemp and flax are also largely cultivated, as well as sugar-beet and, in the extreme south, tobacco. Four-fifths of the population are engaged in agriculture, but they occupy only a quarter of the total area of the Empire. More than a third of the Empire, particularly in Siberia, Finland and the Caucasus, is covered with valuable forests. An eighth part consists of pasture-land and gardens, and quantities of dairy produce are yielded, largely in Siberia. Some idea of the

measure of even such a recent and comparatively unimportant branch of industry as poultry farming can be got from the fact that to England alone eggs are exported annually to the value of nearly five million pounds. Cotton is grown in the Central Asiatic provinces, from which foreigners are zealously excluded. Valuable furs have for many years been hunted in Russian seas and forests. The discovery of the incredibly rich mineral deposits of Russia is comparatively recent, and these are still in the early stages of development. Excellent coal is found in large quantities in Poland and in the basin of the Donetz in the south. A worse quality, sufficing for local industries, is found in the districts round Moscow, in the Urals and the Caucasus. Iron is worked in the neighbourhood of all these coalfields. Practically every kind of mineral is found in exploitable quantities in the Urals and the Caucasus; the former, for example, is the source of nine-tenths of the world's supply of platinum. The Caucasus is a treasure-house of mineral wealth, though, up to the present, only petroleum and manganese have been methodi-

cally worked. A textile industry has sprung up in Poland and the districts round Moscow, where also and at Tula metal goods are manufactured. The internal transport of Russia is at present almost entirely dependent on the chief rivers and a few connecting canals.

To produce for export is in the normal way much easier than for internal trade, as the centre of the natural resources lies in the south, on the shores of the Black Sea and in the basins of the great rivers flowing into it. It is much easier to float goods a short distance down to the Black Sea ports, tranship them into foreign bottoms and thence through the Dardanelles, than to send them by land and railway several hundred or thousand miles into the interior of the country. But the fact that the Dardanelles may be closed at any moment without notice, accounts for the half-hearted organisation of the export trade. In 1911 Turkey was at war with Italy and the Dardanelles were closed and Russian export trade suspended; a year later the first Balkan War broke out, with the same results; following this came the second Balkan War, and Russian exports again ceased,

and now the European War is in its second year and the Dardanelles are still closed. But they have been open at intervals even in these periods, and might, at any moment, be opened again. The exporters, therefore, wait morosely for this to happen and pay little attention to internal markets. These are forced to depend on Colonial produce, that is to say, on the produce of such territories as Poland and Central Asia, which it is advisable to encourage and which, for reasons of Colonial policy, must be diverted into the central markets of the Empire instead of passing into those of neighbours. This accounts for the comparatively developed condition of the industries and manufactures of Poland and of the cotton-growing and silk industry of Central Asia. There is here an incentive to organisation. But, as we say, these, as Colonial centres, are exceptional instances, and home industries are infinitely worse developed.

The exports of wheat and flour, in spite of all disabilities, by way of the Black Sea and the Dardanelles, were valued at twenty-five million pounds annually. When the Dardanelles are closed, the exports cease to exist. Some of the

stock may be diverted with great difficulty to inland markets, but most of it is lost and the entire machinery of export lies useless.

If anything were wanted to show the extraordinary latent wealth of Russia, it would be enough to mention that at the present moment two or three Anglo-Russian companies are in process of formation, which expect to realise fortunes by organising the export from Siberia to England of only one article—frozen chickens!

Could Russia be further developed? The question becomes ludicrous in face of the facts. There is not a single natural resource of Russia, which, to common knowledge, would not generously repay organised exploitation. In the case of agriculture, the primitive instruments generally in use, the ignorant wasteful methods of cultivation, and the absence of any organisation for harvesting and distribution keep production on a most uneconomic basis. To take other resources, indiscriminate slaughter has almost destroyed the commerce in furs and skins, while reckless deforestation has thrown some valuable wooded districts into destitution, and even, by diminishing the size of the rivers, has

had unnecessary evil effects on other districts. The economic development of Russia up to the present shows a sequence of concessions obtained with great difficulty from a hostile administration and carried out in the most immediately profitable and hasty way, without any regard for the actual economic effects of the transaction to Russia at large.

Perhaps the most obvious tributes to Russia's possibilities are the vigorous attempts of foreign capitalists to get control of them. Russia of the Russians remains largely agricultural, but Russia of the foreigners is primarily industrial. Belgian, French, English and German capital is behind nearly all the mining and manufacturing undertakings of Russia. The Government, however, while itself showing only a spasmodic interest in the development of the country, has never encouraged foreign enterprise, except grudgingly to grant concessions to its creditors.

The joining of the Dnieper and Southern Dvina near their sources by a canal is by no means a difficult project, and would connect the Baltic and the Black Seas and drain the

intermediate country; but the scheme has not progressed since the time of Peter the Great. Meanwhile the route for heavy goods from the Black Earth to Petrograd is by way of Gibraltar and the English Channel. Other important schemes that we may mention as certain to bring immediate profit and benefit are a canal to connect the Volga with the Don, and thus with the Black Sea, and further north, a canal to connect the Volga with the Siberian waterways. The projects are old and practicable, but nothing is done.

Whatever we turn to, we find the same record. Agriculture is hindered by the lack of machinery and ignorant misuse of the soil. The flax cultivators either exhaust the soil by over-production or, after using portions for a year or two, leave them fallow altogether and go elsewhere. The scientific rotation of crops is known only in its most primitive elements. While the carrying capacity of refrigerator cars for dairy produce is not a thousandth part of what is needed for the internal use alone of Russia; it has to suffice for both home and export trade. The silk of Turkestan is coarsen-

ing and decaying from the unscientific methods of production. Even if we turn to the cotton cultivation in the Central Asiatic provinces, we find that, though, for the causes we have already mentioned, this industry has been particularly favoured by the administration, it is greatly hampered by lack of irrigation and more scientific methods. The output might easily be bettered and increased, and render Russia free from the necessity of importing foreign cotton.

The only Russian bodies which show any real signs of progressive economic efforts are the Zemstvoes, or county councils, into whose control the local industrial developments virtually fall. However, each particular Zemstvo is too restricted in its area and powers to be able to effect much towards organising the national wealth, and, unfortunately, the co-ordination of the Zemstvoes in a central organisation has not yet been granted the consideration and authority which would give it national status. The best that the Zemstvo can do nowadays is to offer a certain amount of scientific teaching and advice in its particular district.

The reasons for the strangulation of industry by the administration and the lack of incentive to production which allows the Russian people to acquiesce in it, have been made clear to us by the enforced isolation of Russia, and its consequent dependence on the German middleman. In the last five years, as has been said, the Dardanelles have been open for traffic barely a third of the time, and this extraordinary insecurity affects all Russian industries, whether as yet developed or not. There are for Russia two futures, conditioned by this problem: will she obtain this outlet or not? If she does obtain the secure passage of the Dardanelles, quite a different course of events may be expected from what will happen if Turkey, or, for the matter of that, any other military power, remains in control of the outlet from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

With the Dardanelles still in alien hands, whatever the other results are, Russia will remain as before the war. The conflict between the Slavophils and the Westerners will be renewed, but now the economic weakness of the country and its indebtedness abroad will

compel some sort of an exploitation of its wealth. The most that a patriotic minister can hope is to obtain capital equally from all parts of the world, so that no single foreign nation shall acquire preponderant influence. But in the end, the Central Powers, from their proximity, from their previous experience, knowledge and influence, and, above all, from their inevitable control as middlemen of all the outlets of Russia into Europe, must become the most prominent. If they succeed in forcing another disastrous tariff upon Russia, she may at last fall finally into their power. This war is perhaps the last war of independence Russia will be able to fight. If she fails—if, that is to say, the Dardanelles remain in alien hands—she will become to Germany much as Siberia is to her. She will be developed, and Siberia too, but the benefit will be for Germany first and for the world afterwards. What this will mean to England and France in coming economic struggles with the Central Powers should convince the most active Russophobe of the necessity of saving Russia to our side. The political future of Russia, under circumstances

of a failure to open the Dardanelles, is uncertain. With the economic control, the political balance must swing over to Germany. Some sort of a revolution might be brought about if the Románovs proved obstinately hostile, and a republic formed, which would be more pliable for German hands ; or the present house might be upheld, if it renounced all but the shadow of power.

But if Russia obtains the secure use of the Dardanelles, rapid changes will follow. At last there will be a real incentive to native capital to exploit its own resources. Politically, this will result in the sweeping away of the ultra-reactionary portions of the bureaucracy. The reasons which have previously justified the strangulation of Russia will no longer exist, and the task of the Government will be to direct and encourage exploitation in the national interest, always with an eye to becoming a self-contained economic nation. The increase of trade with England, France and America will permit the establishment of a high protective tariff against Germany. Russia at last will be a willing and productive great nation.

One problem will remain in either case, the scarcity of workers. Very few of the peasants have transformed their communal holdings with their corresponding communal privileges into private property, and of these fewer still have sold up and drifted into the towns. The proletariate of the towns, therefore, remains much the same as in the last fifty years. The numerous household serfs, possessing no share in the communal land, had no choice after the emancipation than to sell their labour to the rising industrialists, and their descendants remain the main proletarian type. In recent years there has been a large ingress of peasants to the factories in the winter months, who return in the spring to their lands, but this class is unsuitable for the more modern factories. What proletariate there already is, is not sufficient even for the present meagre needs of Russian industry. Nothing but cruel taxation or expropriation could send the peasants against their will into the mines and the factories. If the Dardanelles are not won and the situation remains as before, we might expect a state of things in Russia comparable only with the

worst horrors of English or Japanese wage-slavery. A bankrupt country, exploited by Germans for Germany, with a melancholy, exasperated and starving people—Russia without an outlet suggests an appalling picture for the future.

But even if Russia gains the security of the Dardanelles, the problem of labour will remain. The Slavophils will have seen their policy of Chauvinism justified by the final throwing off of the German control, and they will be all-powerful. Is it likely that this party, whose campaign of sentiment has always been directed against the evils of the wage-system in the west, will exert their power to bring about by over-taxation or expropriation the same state of things in Russia? Nevertheless, Russia cannot be a purely agricultural nation and remain at the same time independent of her neighbours. She must in some way organise her industries in the national interest. The foreign capitalising till now of most industrial undertakings is a sufficient reason for present and past neglect, but this does not apply to concerns exploited with Russian capital. The Slavophil might

reply that his objection to the introduction of Western capitalism into Russia is directed against the whole system, whether in foreign or native hands; the insistence on its foreign origin was the objection rather of the Government, which was endeavouring to maintain the balance between the conflicting parties. From the Slavophil point of view, any form of capitalism, whether German, Belgian, English, or Russian, produces the same social phenomena and is repugnant.

We have suggested that as this party would be the most significant at the end of a successful war, its theories would triumph over its rivals'. There seems to be one way by which the difficulty of exploitation without the wage-system may be arranged. Cavour said that the Russian village communes would conquer the whole world. Since this system is the basis of Russian life and its retention the chief aim of the Slavophil policy, we may anticipate its popularity as a national asset after the war. Applied nationally, the system of the responsible commune becomes very similar to what is known in England as the system of National

Guilds. Briefly, all the workers in any industry, directors, artisans, and apprentices alike, form a guild which contracts as such with the Government to exploit and develop its particular resource. Instead of wage-slaves and insecure salary-gentlemen, there is formed an industrial regiment of guildsmen with the graded pay and privileges and qualified autonomy of a military regiment, and with the psychology of men willingly engaged in productive national service.

How the germ of this organisation is contained in the Zemstvoes and their component agricultural and industrial communes at the present day, will be clear from the following chapter.

THE MIR AND THE FUTURE

CHAPTER IV

THE MIR AND THE FUTURE

BEFORE any state system is developed, there spring up in every country institutions of government, apparently spontaneous and natural. Such in England, for instance, was the Witenagemot, a system of local self-government which the Normans replaced with a centralised system of administration. So natural, however, seem the Witenagemots to be to the English character and conditions, and so effective in practice, that, in course of centuries, we find them being re-established by the state under the title of parish councils. In Russia this policy of re-establishment has not been necessary, for, side by side with the centralised political institution of the state, we find the old original forms of local control still existing. It is these we propose to examine in this chapter.

The Russian village community—the "Mir"

or "World"—is no stranger to English readers. Its main characteristics have been often described. However, we are not concerned with it as a picturesque curiosity, but as it appears to the Slavophils—the essential and sound basis of the national productive life.

It is hardly necessary to repeat that the main characteristics of the Mir at the present time are communal ownership of property, communal organisation of its development, and communal responsibility to the State in the implied contract entered into with it. The customary procedure is for the villagers to decide by mutual agreement how much each member should contribute towards the taxes laid upon the village, and to give him a share of the village land in proportion. Once the size of each portion is agreed upon, the division takes place by lot, and is repeated by mutual consent at varying intervals of, say, three or seven years. This is not the place to discuss in detail the allowances and proportions allotted in exceptional instances, in the case, for example, of minors or of men with many dependents. It is enough to say that no

critic, either Russian or foreigner, whatever his objections to the theory or results of the system, has ever suggested that this part of the distribution is not extraordinarily successful and satisfactory.

Although the Mir has undergone many vicissitudes, particularly in the last half-century, it is still essentially the same as it always was. No period is known in Russian history when the Mir did not exist, and the same main features have been preserved throughout the ages. Always the ownership in common and the distributions by lot have existed and the periodical redistributions. In neighbouring countries, such as Poland and Georgia, the principle of private ownership is practically universal, but in Russia, the Mir. It existed in the days before serfdom, survived throughout that period, and emerged into the comparative liberty of the Emancipation. One important condition has altered. In the days of serfdom the village commune was bound by a tacit contract with its squire to labour on his land, and it was this responsibility which the villagers divided among themselves by mutual agreement. After

the Emancipation the squire ceased to be a direct contracting party with the commune. It had, indeed, to make him annual payments, but for these and the administrative taxes the village was responsible to the Government. Thus the Mir became a national institution, and the mayor, whose responsible and thankless post was constantly passed on, became an official intermediary between the commune and the Government agents.

The most obvious advantages of the Mir as an agricultural producer over other systems are its centralised local organisation and its communal ownership of the means of production. There is no Western European village so unhappy as that in which one farmer possesses more efficient tools than the others. Sooner or later by leave or lien he gains power over them and they become his dependents. The Mir, on the other hand, is able to use all technical devices for the common profit without any individual member being directly favoured. At the same time, the community of economic interests establishes a public spirit of goodwill which tends to make the Mir an

enthusiastic and efficient institution. An objection that is sometimes urged against the Mir is the injustice of its system of redistributions. One peasant, it is said, spends his term carefully cultivating his allotment, but another works no more than he needs to keep himself in roof and fare and, by bad usage, does his portion more harm than good. The only reply that can be made to this is, that it must be equally obvious to the rascal's neighbours, who, in such a democratic institution as the Mir, would be unlikely to allow one man's pleasure to diminish the welfare of the whole. More serious are the objections to the economic value of the Mir. One of these is that the communal property is divided into infinitesimal strips, several of which are owned by each member. The defence for this custom is, of course, that in this way nobody is likely to get all good and no bad land. On the other hand, a villager may be allotted plots so far apart from one another that he spends a large amount of his time tramping from one to the other. This objection, however, is more academic than actual. Undoubtedly the abuse does occur, but

an administrative circular might easily induce the Mirs, which show themselves so practical in other aspects of the allotments, to pay more attention to this.

These are frivolous criticisms in comparison with the main point that is raised against the Mirs—their economic fault. It is urged that they create a body far too small and decentralised to have any but a retrograde effect upon production; producing for a village and producing for an empire require quite different organisations. With this objection none but the most fanatical supporters of the Mir can disagree. It may be true, as the Westerners say, that the private ownership of property, however little, renders a man an effective citizen of the Empire and encourages him to production and thrift. But we must not forget that the Social Democrats also upheld private ownership as a means of creating an actively revolutionary class. "Give a man," said they, "a little land and he will want more, and there is your revolutionary!" We must also remember that the relaxation of the communal ownership means the simultaneous loss of all communal

privileges, and the state of things comes into being by which one or two men tend to acquire power over the rest, in which process the public interest is likely to receive small consideration.

With the rise of industrialism in Russia in recent years two administrative attempts have been made to draw away at least the superfluous members of the Mirs into the towns. First, the old system of treating the household as the social unit was ordered to be abandoned in favour of every mature male villager. This legislation was undoubtedly directed against the Mirs, but the procedure it altered was one that was an anachronism, and, had the attack ended there, the Mirs would certainly not have suffered from the innovation. But, unfortunately, no sooner had each grown man received a portion for himself than, in 1907, he was given permission by the Government to claim it as his own in perpetuity, with the right of sale. The motive of this was clearly to create a class of men who, having claimed their land, sold it and spent the proceeds, would drift into the industrial districts and sell their labour for a wage to the

industrialists. Till the present time, however, not more than one peasant in ten has claimed land, and only one in twenty of the total has sold out. However, in the lean years of heavy taxation that must follow the war, whether Russia is successful or not, this new law provides the way for the weakening of the Mirs and the creation of an industrial proletariate. With a mention of the serious nature of this attack, we may pass from the Mir to a consideration of some more modern developments of the same original Russian institution.

The Artyél is in industry what the Mir is in agriculture. There is nothing new about the Artyél but its surroundings. In the old days of serfdom carpenters or wheelwrights or sawyers would join in a band, elect a leader, and traverse a district together, contracting in a body with whomever they met to do work for them. They had to pay a certain due to their squire for permission to travel, a system which he usually found very profitable. In more recent times every absent member of the Mir was bound to pay it a fine for his absence, which was spent as a rule in a general feast.

At the same time the communal principle was introduced into the towns. All the porters at the railway stations, to take a simple example, have their Artyéls, and these, in return for the monopoly of the occupation, guarantee the services and honesty of their members. The same principle is at work in many branches of industry. So far as they are defensive bodies against repression or the employment of unassociated labourers, they approximate to the English trade union, but in their positive activities as contracting bodies for responsible industrial service, they have a status resembling far more that of the English manager than of the English trade unionist.

In districts which are both agricultural and industrial we find the Mirs and Artyéls under one standard, that of the Zemstvo, the provincial assembly or county council. This body is elected by the societies of nobles, the municipalities and the Mirs. We have already considered the composition of the Duma, which is no more than the political reflection of the main features of the economic contour of the Empire, as manifested in the Zemstvoes, and in that

connection we went to some extent into the main features of the economic position. The Zemstvoes, which are active organisations, have never been granted the same authority as the rather unsubstantial Duma. The present Tsar, in his Coronation speech in 1892, stated precisely that he was not moved by "absurd illusions" to favour the participation of representatives of the Zemstvoes in the internal government. There commenced as a consequence what was known as the de-liberalising or "Righting" of the Zemstvoes, but though this undoubtedly tended to extinguish their more socialist tendencies, the final result of the process has led to the increased power and energy of the bodies. In fact, a recent central congress of the Zemstvoes has been forbidden by the Government, not because of any liberal fanaticism or unpatriotism, but, on the contrary, because of the evident determination of all classes of the delegates to carry to victory both the war and the peace following it by a vigorous manifestation of the functions of the Zemstvo and its attainment of national recognition and status.

So far as we have examined the basic principle of the Mir, the Artyél and the Zemstvo, we find it to be the primitive Russian social institution of the responsible community. If we assume that Russia will go the way of Western European nations, we may expect the gradual break-up and disappearance of this, just as in England the Witenagemot disappeared. But against this we have the fact that Russia is by no means still a primitive country; she is already, if unwillingly, in part industrialised; manufactures have sprung up around the mines, but still the Mirs and the Artyéls survive. Some of the coal mines, in fact, are partly lost to their foreign capitalists, because the communes, under whose land the vein leads, refuse to allow it to be worked by the mineowners, and mine it themselves as Mirs! This is only one of many illustrations of a vitality which, taken with the constantly increasing significance of the Artyél in industrial life, would seem to be a sign that the old system is not breaking up. Indeed, the disappearance of similar institutions in Western Europe need not necessarily be taken to mean

that they will cease to exist in Russia, for, after all, Russia, as a nation on the frontier of Europe, with a row of subject buffer states between her and the West and a vast and unexploited colonial empire in Siberia, is by no means bound to the same sequence of phenomena as Europe. Even if the main economic periods are the same, their manifestations may be altogether different.

If, as we have suggested, a Russian victory in the war, with the release of the Dardanelles, means a new economic impulse as well as the political triumph of the Slavophils, it is not improbable that we may see them make some attempt to establish the principle of their favourite institution, the Mir, on a national basis. A practical method by which the principle of State government and the popular local and native Russian system of the Mir are combined, seems to be contained in the creation of such economic institutions as National Guilds.

PETER THE THRICE-GREAT

CHAPTER V

PETER THE THRICE-GREAT

THERE is a farmyard phenomenon, known as the egg-bound chicken. This occurs when a fully developed chick finds its shell too hard to break and dies inside, unhatched. We may compare Russia's position in Europe with this. It is seen in its effect on Alexander I. As Crown Prince he was a convinced liberal reformer, but when, as Tsar, he had to peck his way into the light of Europe, he found his neighbours too hard a shell to break through. His schemes of reform never hatched out, and he reigned and died a morose reactionary. Ivan the Terrible almost broke the shell, but the ring of enemies round him was too strong, and he too died in the bitterness of Russia's isolation. In all history, there is only one Russian who ever broke the shell and passed freely into outer Europe. He was Peter the Great. The

myths and stories that have collected round his personality, his very title, his giant's height and strength, all these are Peter's due as the symbolic personification of the Russian people. He is the epitome of the nation. His career symbolises its previous history and seems to take us far beyond the present. It is at once the embryology of Russia and a forecast of its adolescence.

Properly to estimate Peter's significance, we must call to mind the Russia of his time. At his birth, in 1672, the Russian Empire lay between the Arctic Ocean on the north and the Black Earth in the south. Siberia was Russian, but the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea was a no-man's land. A Tartar Khan held the Crimea under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey, and in the south and south-west were the restless and treacherous Cossacks of the Ukraine. Poland, as yet united and powerful, was in the west. The whole northern and eastern coast of the Baltic was in the hands of the Swedes. The only free way of communication between Russia and the nations of the west was by distant Archangel and the

Arctic Ocean, which was all the sea-coast she possessed.

Into such a cage was Peter born. His father, the Tsar Alexis (1629-1676) had thirteen children, of whom only four survived him—by his first wife, two sons and a daughter, Theodore, Ivan and Sophia, and by his second wife, Peter. Theodore, a young man of feeble character, reigned after his father until his death in 1682. Sophia was now about twenty-five years old; Ivan, who was weak-minded, lame and half blind, was fifteen, and Peter was ten. At first, Sophia acted as regent to the two Imperial minors.

The difference in the natures of the brothers was always evident. One of the revolts of the Streltsi afforded an illustration of this. They were twenty-two regiments of janissaries, descended from Ivan the Terrible's personal bodyguard, and as a standing military force, they became an extremely powerful body in the troublous times following Theodore's death. They had occasional misgivings that evil work was going on in the Kremlin palaces. On one of these occasions they demanded that the two

Tsars should be shown to them, and Peter's mother, Natalia, had to lead both boys upon a balcony for the soldiers to behold. Some of the soldiers climbed up and inspected the boys' features by torchlight; Ivan almost fainted with terror, but Peter only looked about him with self-possession and interest.

The anxieties of the Streltsi were so frequently manifested that Sophia and her minister, Golítzin, transferred the court from Moscow to within the walls of the Tróitza Monastery, forty-five miles away. The Streltsi occupied the Kremlin, but decided to withdraw and uphold the court. It was about this time that Peter organised a little regiment of servants and drummer-boys, and served in it himself. Meanwhile he learned several trades. Also, under the tuition of the court doctor, van der Hulst, and some of the latter's Dutch friends, Peter studied scientific subjects. A frivolous but good-natured Swiss adventurer, Lefort, introduced the young prince to the diversions of the large foreign quarter of Moscow. Another man under whose influence Peter came was Gordon, a Scotch officer in the Russian

service. Sophia became more and more unpopular. In 1686 she negotiated a peace with Poland and Sweden. She paid the former a large indemnity in settlement of its somewhat audacious claims to various Russian provinces, and withdrew from the Finnish borders on condition that the Orthodox Church was tolerated in Swedish territories. Golítzin led two expeditions against the Tartars of the Crimea; both were humiliatingly unsuccessful, but Sophia and Ivan publicly thanked and honoured him. Peter, however, refused even to receive him. In consequence of these events, Peter's relations with Sophia became so strained that, in 1689, he had to escape from the Kremlin, whither the court had returned, and flee half-naked to the Tróitza Monastery for refuge. The Streltsi, playing chorus to the drama, were at first undecided which party to support, but, after a while, Gordon and the other foreign officers led them to Peter, and Sophia was forced to retire to a convent.

Peter was now a young man and, with Ivan more than ever unfit and unwilling to reign, he began to be acknowledged the real head of

the Empire. His fondness for the company of foreigners—he even went to live in the foreign quarter of Moscow—soon led to protests from the more conservative of his subjects. He seems to have been sufficiently light-hearted to survive this annoyance, as well as a dull marriage arranged for him by his mother. He passed his time mainly in drilling with his little regiment and in boatbuilding. He was both a good carpenter and a skilful pilot, and mixed as an equal with the foreign sailors at the only port in his dominions, Archangel. In 1695 he attempted to succeed where Golítzin had failed and led an army against the Khan of the Crimea, laying siege to Azov. But he was equally unsuccessful and had to retire. In the next year Ivan died and Peter became at last the sole Tsar.

We may pause here to remark that Russia, at that stage of Peter's career, stood in just the situation to which Ivan the Terrible had brought it. It was the Ishmael of the east, a young nation surrounded by foes. But whereas the best of Ivan the Terrible's life had passed before he saw a united Russia, Peter, at the

same stage, was only twenty-four. This is a significant age in the Russia of to-day. The rebuff that Peter met with at Azov corresponds to the disillusionment of the average young Russian when he leaves the university. All students in Russia are expected to be revolutionaries, but at this age they usually begin to lose their ideals and to turn into placid, sensual, hopeless young-old men. Most young Russians are like this in life, as, in literature, are such characters as Chíchikov, the hero of *Dead Souls* and Hléstakov of *The Reviser*. It cannot be said that Peter the Great passed from the category of these by any conscious decision of his own; simply, his character drew too deep a draught to float down such shallow channels. His first great decision came later, and we shall emphasise it in due course.

Peter's humiliation before Azov stung him into the organisation of his country as an active military and naval power. He summoned Venetian shipbuilders to his docks at Voronezh, on the Don. Foreign sappers were sent for to instruct his army. Azov was besieged again in 1696 and taken. This was not

all; Peter determined to go abroad himself and learn the crafts of the west. In March, 1697, an embassy of two hundred left Moscow for Europe. Lefort was at the head, and Peter, incognito, was among the thirty picked young men who were to study western methods. He carried a whip inscribed "I am a student, and I desire a teacher." The destination was Holland, whence Peter's earlier instructors had come. The first part of his journey lay through Riga, where he saw the Baltic Sea for the first time. He was badly received here by the Swedish commandant, but met with better treatment elsewhere. His presence soon leaked out, but officially the incognito was preserved, and Lefort was always asked if his august master in Moscow was well. At Königsberg he met Leibnitz, who admired his good temper and intelligence and skill as a trumpeter and drummer. Peter, who lost no opportunity for self-instruction, acquainted himself there with the science of artillery. Passing on, he made the acquaintance of the Electress of Hanover, who, though somewhat scandalised by his gaucherie and wild manners, was pleased with

his sense and amiability. At last the embassy reached the Dutch border, where Peter had the experience of being asked by an old woman if Russians were Christians. At Zaandam, Peter explained that his party was merely a party of workmen without any connection with the embassy that was expected. Recognising a man fishing as an old acquaintance, he went to live in his house. For a week he rowed about the quays of Zaandam; but his height and a certain idiosyncrasy of twitching his muscles betrayed his identity to the inhabitants, and he was forced to remove to the more secluded shipyards of Amsterdam.

He stayed in Holland for some months, living as a carpenter and even adding dentistry to his other trades. A desire to carry knowledge back to his own country led him to make exhaustive inquiries into the craft of boat-building in particular. He at last came to the conclusion that, while in Holland the craft was founded on rule of thumb, in England it had a geometrical foundation. At once he determined to sail for England. William III sent him a yacht and a convoy of men-of-war, and

he arrived at London. At first he lived at Norfolk Street in the Strand, but afterwards in Evelyn's house at Deptford, near the shipyards in which he worked. Here he spoiled a fine old hedge by taking a short cut to his work through it in the early morning with a wheelbarrow, and left the house in an indescribably filthy state, William paying for the repairs. After a while, he crossed again to the Continent on his way to Venice, but at Vienna, in June, 1698, he received the news that the Streltsi had again become mutinous, and he hurried back to Russia. He found time, however, to spend several days on the way in the congenial company of Augustus the Strong, King of Poland, with whom he made an offensive alliance against Sweden.

It is at this stage that we should enlarge on the significance of Peter's policy. The Streltsi, under the impression that Peter had died abroad and that his death had been concealed by his foreign friends, had allied themselves with the Chauvinist party, which demanded the expulsion of all foreigners from Russia, and the abandonment of an active foreign policy.

Sophia's pacts with Poland and Sweden were much more to the liking of these elements than Peter's journey among the western nations and his attempts to engage Russia in the future of Europe. When it is remembered that in the last years of Ivan the Terrible the land-locked isolation of Russia had its maddening effect even on his powerful character, some idea may be got how strong by this time had the prejudices grown against any close connections with the hated and hostile foreigners. Peter, just returned from a voyage of instruction abroad, had to decide upon the future.

As things were, he seemed to have two alternatives, both bad and uninviting. He might cast off his foreign friends and learning, and govern Russia after the tradition of his father, as a hierarchy wholly and exclusively Orthodox and Byzantine. Or he could exalt Europeanism in a foredoomed attempt to transform Russia into as highly developed and civilised a nation as Holland or England. This was the dilemma before Peter in the closing years of the seventeenth century.

But is it not also the dilemma of the in-

tellectuals of the present time? The one alternative is that of the Slavophils, the other that of the Westerners. If we can see clearly how Peter solved the difficulty, it will perhaps be possible to apply the solution to the problem to-day.

Peter's journey to Europe can be taken as symbolic of the tendency westward of the intellectuals of the nineteenth century. Some of these, indeed, never returned to Russia, as, for example, Herzen (1812–1870). Others returned to praise European methods to their countrymen. Such were the Westerners as a party. Whether they travelled westwards in person or in thought alone is immaterial; Peter's journey remains symbolical of theirs, and their propaganda was one of the alternatives before him. Nor need his journey have prevented him from joining the reactionary party. We have seen that the most determined Slavophils were repentant Westerners. They too had passed through the western school, but they had put those theories away as unsuitable and ended by extolling all that was wholly and primitively Russian. Peter, then, was at the

cross-roads. Most Russians, like Oblómov, see the dilemma and faint before it, taking neither one course nor the other.

His solution was simple: he realised that the whole dilemma was a disorder incident to a land-locked empire, and decided to remove the difficulty by obtaining an outlet for Russia. His return from Europe marks the beginning of his attempt to join Russia to the world by the sea.

Peter commenced by putting the Empire under discipline. A single hour sufficed to rout the forces of the Streltsi in battle, and their privileges were abolished for ever. At the same time he set himself against some ultra-national customs, such as wearing long beards and long clothes. With his own hand, he cut off the beards of his councillors, and his deputies carried out the same office in other parts of the Empire. Long beards were not, however, altogether prohibited, but an annual tax of from twelve to forty pounds was levied on them, and their possessors had to take out a licence each year and carry it round their necks. At the same time, Peter ordered that

all clothes of more than a certain length were to be shortened at sight by his guards. These reforms were extremely unpopular among certain sections of the people, and some of the peasants preserved their beards to be buried with them, so that St. Nicholas might know why they dared to come to him with smooth chins. Peter also forbade his subjects to prostrate themselves before him, advising them to grovel less and serve the State more. He changed the Russian New Year from September 1st, which was supposed by the Orthodox Church to be the date of the creation, to January 1st, ignoring protests that Eve's apple could not have been ripe at that time of year. Peter performed a noteworthy industrial development by linking up associations of master-workmen into craft guilds.

In 1699 Lefort died. Peter wept, and said, "Now I am left without one true friend. He alone was faithful to me; in whom can I trust now?" In 1700 there died the patriarch of the church, and Peter, irritated by the constant opposition he had received from the clergy, refused to appoint a successor.

The embassy of 1697–8 had failed to gain Russia any allies against the Turks, and this and the strength of the latter made it expedient for Peter to arrange a peace with the Porte, which left him free to carry on his campaign against Sweden. It must not be forgotten, however, that his docks at Voronezh continued to turn out ships for use in the south when the time should come. The war with Sweden opened somewhat disastrously with a defeat at Narva, which had, however, the good result of causing Peter to enlarge and perfect his military organisation. Charles of Sweden became involved in the "Polish bog," and Peter took the opportunity to renew the pressure on the Baltic coast. In 1703 he captured the fortifications of Nyenkanz, on which site he commenced to build his "paradise" of St. Petersburg. To make this known among foreign merchants, he offered a large reward to the captain of the first ship that should enter the port. When it arrived, he piloted it himself into dock. Meanwhile the war continued with better success, and in 1704 another battle of Narva was fought which avenged the former.

Peter was so incensed at the sight of the Russian soldiers pillaging the town that he killed one with his own hands, and, entering the chamber where the Swedish commandant and his councillors were sitting, he flung his sword on the table, crying, "Do not be afraid; this is Russian, not Swedish blood." In the same year the important fortress of Dorpat surrendered to the Russians.

In these years Peter, besides his military organisation and the establishment of St. Petersburg (which he then called "Pitersburg" in honour of his Dutch tutors), continued his civil reforms. In 1702, a school of mathematics and navigation was opened in Moscow under three Scottish professors. In the same year, a system of police was instituted. In 1703, the first Russian theatre and newspaper made their appearance. Two years later, Peter made a new attack upon the power of the church by regulating the affairs of the monasteries. For one thing, no novices were to be admitted under the age of forty. As an immediate consequence of these and his previous

reforms, Peter began to be considered by the adherents of the church as Anti-Christ and his twitches were supposed to be due to diabolical possession. Peter, however, took this condemnation lightly. In 1703 he had made the acquaintance of Catherine, who had commenced her life as governess to a pastor's family in Marienburg. When this was taken by the Russians in 1702, she was brought to Russia to Menshikov's house, where Peter met her. They were married secretly in 1707, after she had borne him a son. Peter's first wife, whom he had confined to a convent in 1698, did not die until 1731. His sister, Sophia, died in 1704.

The war with Sweden continued. In 1708 the Ukrainians under Mazeppa attempted to form an alliance with the Turks, but this was frustrated by Peter. In 1709, however, these "grasshoppers of the Steppes," as Peter called them, played him false again by going over to the Swedes. There followed the great battle at Poltava. Mazeppa, to save himself, offered to betray his new chief, Charles XII, to the Russians, but this came to nothing. The

Swedes were outnumbered and utterly defeated, and Charles escaped, almost alone, over the Turkish frontier. Peter was hit three times in the battle. One bullet struck his saddle, another passed through his hat, and a third hit the cross which, in Russian fashion, he carried on his neck. After the battle, Peter dined with the captive Swedish generals. He drank a toast to his instructors in the art of arms, and, asked to whom he referred, he replied: "Yourselves, Swedish sirs!" Of the battle of Poltava, Voltaire wrote: "Of all the battles which have ever made bloody the earth, this is the only one which, instead of producing only destruction, has served the welfare of mankind." Peter himself wrote: "Now at last is the foundation-stone of Pitersburg, with God's help, firmly laid." The immediate result of Poltava was the rise of Russian prestige all over the world. Russia, by Peter's successful attempt to open up the Baltic Sea, had become a great nation. Leibnitz said: "For my part, with the advantage of the human race before my eyes, I am very glad that so great an empire is enter-

ing upon the road of good service and order."

After the battle of Poltava the life of Peter the Great presents less interest to us; perhaps, since the eve of that victory takes us symbolically to the state of Russia of to-day, we are not able to gather the threads any further in relation to the future. One objection may be raised to the suggestion of the parallel interest of Peter's Russia and the Russia of the present time. If Peter solved the dilemma of a land-locked empire by securing an outlet to the Baltic, why has the same situation arisen again, with the Baltic still open to Russia? We have shown in previous chapters why an outlet to the sea is essential to Russia's well-being, even to its national independence. The present objection is easily answered. In Peter's time, the neighbours who hemmed in Russia were Sweden and Poland, and a way past these was already an outlet into the world. Russia then was worse than land-locked; to coin a word, she was hinterland-locked. Nowadays, the subordinate position of Poland, the minor importance of Sweden and Denmark, and the

rise of the Central Powers in their place make the Baltic no longer an open, but a locked sea for Russia.

It is impossible to tell whether Peter had any forebodings of developments which would make the outlet to the Baltic insufficient for Russia's independence. But it is, at least, significant that, after following up the victory of Poltava with successful campaigns in Finland and Courland, he led an army against the Turks. Charles XII had sought refuge in the Balkans, and, following a disregarded ultimatum to the Porte, Peter determined to dislodge him by force. The Russians were so indiscreet as to trust to the friendship of the Balkan Christians and the treachery of these put Peter and his army in the Turks' power. Peter succeeded by clever diplomacy and, it is said, by bribery in persuading the Vizier in command of the Turkish army to come to terms. Among other conditions, Peter surrendered Azov to the Turks, but he refused to give up to Sweden any of the approaches to St. Petersburg. Charles was to be sent out of the Turkish dominions.

After this failure, Peter returned to the north, and, in 1713, captured another large portion of Finland from the Swedes. His internal reforms continued. A budget was drawn up, and the registration of births introduced. The exposure of weakly infants was prohibited, as well as the carrying of poison or weapons likely to be used in sudden murder. The empire had already been divided into eight administrative sections, each under a governor, and now a senate of nine members was formed with supreme internal authority, even over the governors. After the last successes in Finland, the senate was brought to St. Petersburg. In the same year, 1714, the erection of stone buildings was prohibited in all other parts of the empire, with the aim and result of inducing a large number of artisans to work at the new city, which consisted already of between thirty and forty thousand houses. Labourers also were brought under compulsion to work at St. Petersburg and in the dockyards at Voronezh. In 1716 Peter commenced his second journey to Western Europe.

On this occasion he did not travel incognito but officially at the head of the mission, and was able to appreciate to the utmost the new position he had won for Russia by giving her a sea-way to Europe. Whereas, on his previous journey, Russia had been looked upon as a barbarous kingdom of little importance, she was now sought in friendship by the great nations of the west. Indeed, by Peter's visit to Paris on this occasion, the foundations were laid of the friendship between France and Russia. No less interesting than the changed position of Russia in European councils was the significant development in Peter's personality. Frederick of Prussia observed that his early exuberance had been improved into a modest and decent dignity. A French courtier wrote about him, "This prince, said to be barbarous, is not so at all. He displayed sentiments of grandeur, generosity and politeness, which we by no means expected." Peter indeed realised that he now stood at the head of a free empire, a peer in Europe.

He returned from this second European journey, as from the first, convinced that his

policy was right, and determined not to permit the Chauvinist elements at home to endanger the future of the country. It came to his knowledge that Alexis, the son of his first wife and the heir to the succession, had declared, if he came to the throne, he would disband the fleet, reduce the army, and maintain a purely internal policy. As on the previous occasion Peter had broken up the Streltsi, he now determined to ruin the hopes of the reactionaries by sacrificing the person on whom they rested—his son. A young man of ill-balanced character, Alexis was now twenty-six years old. In 1715 he had wished to renounce the succession and retire into a monastery, but Peter had advised him to wait six months before determining on this decision. By that time, Alexis had fled the country with his peasant mistress and appealed to the Austrians to grant him a refuge. He was conducted in secrecy to Naples. Peter soon heard of his presence there and sent an envoy to him to invite him to return. When he arrived, Peter demanded from him a full confession of all his confidants. Alexis was put to the torture and, in 1718, died

mysteriously in prison. At the funeral service Peter wept at the priest's text: "O Absalom, my son, my son."

After this sacrifice of his own son, Peter continued his work. In 1718 St. Petersburg was established as the seat of government, and Peter refused any terms of peace with Sweden that suggested the restoration of either Reval or the Finnish coast. In this same year, Charles XII died. Peter now led a successful expedition in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea, bringing the north-western coast under Russian rule. In 1721, after his fleet had defeated the Swedes in the Baltic and even made a descent upon Stockholm itself, terms of peace were at last settled. Russia retained Livonia and Esthonia and the eastern coast of Finland, while the rest of Finland was restored to Sweden with an indemnity of two million thalers. In this same year, Peter was formally proclaimed " Father of the Fatherland, the Great, and Emperor of All the Russias."

It will be remembered that Peter had refused to appoint a new patriarch in 1700. He now carried further his attack on the church privi-

leges. In 1721, the government of the church was transferred to a department of the state, the Holy Synod, in control of which was a layman, appointed by the emperor. A year later, Peter denounced the theory of succession by primogeniture and appointed his second wife, Catherine, to succeed him. She had long since replaced Lefort as Peter's friend and councillor. The marriage, which had taken place in 1707, was publicly announced in 1712.

There followed a year or two of comparative aimlessness, which, indeed, has remained the characteristic of Russian policy to the outbreak of the present war. The Turks were too strong and too distant to be attacked successfully; the future of the Baltic was unknown. There was no further occupation for Peter's genius, and it was observed that, in these years, he suffered occasionally from fits of moroseness. However, he designed and built some canals. In 1724 Peter assisted at the rescue of some shipwrecked sailors, standing to his waist in the icy water of the Neva. He contracted a severe chill and on January 28, 1725, he died. A Dutch doctor said of his death: "My God,

was that great man allowed to die for want of a pennyworth of medicine!" But, when one remembers the fate that befell Ivan the Terrible and Alexander I in their later years, Peter's early death appears not such a misfortune. It is good that Russian history should hold one great figure who was not driven mad by melancholy.

THE PROGRESS OF RUSSIAN THOUGHT

CHAPTER VI

THE PROGRESS OF RUSSIAN THOUGHT

It is almost impossible for us in England to realise what an autocracy means. We are familiar with the idea of a ruling class or caste, but not of a ruling man. But the Tsar is such a man and his word is law. It is true he relegates his authority, to a certain extent, to a council of the principal Ministers of State; but without exception they hold their appointments solely by his nomination and on his approval. He can dismiss any or all of them at pleasure. The power of the autocracy is maintained in the internal affairs of Russia by three main supports. First, there is the bureaucracy, in which promotion is almost exclusively by nomination, a method which removes all reforming initiative from its members. Then there is what is known as the system of Governors. Russia, for the most part, is divided administratively into governments,

each under a governor. He has unlimited rights of supervision and control within his area. Under certain circumstances, he can place his district under martial law of the severest type. He is liable before no court of appeal except the Autocrat himself, to whom alone he is responsible. Thirdly, there is the secret police. This vast detective system exists separately from the regular police force, and, once again, is responsible to none but the highest authorities. It may occur that sections of the secret police are placed under the orders of a bureaucrat or a governor, but it often happens that it works, not only without their orders, but even in defiance of them. Sometimes even, the three or four chief ministers in whom the control of these forces is supposed to rest, find that action has been taken behind their backs by the supreme authority—the Autocrat Himself (God and the Tsar in Russia must always be referred to in capital letters) and His court.

Thus triply brassbound against popular reform—that is, reform from below—the autocracy has also protected itself against any danger of

influential parallel authority. In many European countries the Church has either controlled the State, or been, at least, a formidable factor in public affairs. In Russia the Church, as we have seen, was transformed by Peter the Great from an independent authority to a subordinate limb of the State itself. The effect of this on the Church we shall discuss in another chapter. The effect on the autocracy was that the most dangerous rival centre of authority was removed. The opposition or even the friendly independence of the Church might have created the atmosphere in which independent criticism could develop and flourish. But this and every other such ground of dispute was removed by the young autocracy, whose three guardians have been vigilant and fairly successful ever since in preventing any new centre of opinion from rising to the light.

The censorship, also, an office which has reached administrative perfection under the Russian autocracy, has always aimed at a watchful control of all branches of thought and the anticipation of likely centres of opposition to the autocracy.

The result of this deliberate centralisation of all Russian activities and the prevention and persecution of all local centres has made Russian thought a straw entirely at the mercy of the administrative wind. When the wind blows Europe-wards, Russian thought takes up a relation to European culture; when the wind is about, the straw floats back eastwards. All attempts to break this rule have led to disaster. The history of Russian literature has been called a martyrology. The martyrs were those who faced about at the wrong time.

But the greatest harm of the autocratic supervision of thought has been the elimination of criticism. Hostile criticism is obviously what the whole machine has been intended to destroy; and it has succeeded. The critical faculty is almost dormant in Russia; prohibition has nearly killed it. To take one illustration, Russian literary criticism is the laughing-stock of the cultured foreigner. Confused in their standards and their methods, the older critics were merely didactic Liberals; the modern critics have a method of approaching the object of criticism from all sides at once,

changing their relations to it and their own point of view with astounding carelessness. One chief harm of this atrophy of criticism has been the practical elimination of philosophic thought. Platitudes have passed for truths and the opposition of half-truths to them as philosophy. It is significant that proverbs have come to mean so much in Russia; their dogmatic pointedness is sufficient for the low and uncritical level of Russian thought. It is only in certain universal branches of thought that the lack of a national criticism has had no evil effect. To take an instance, it goes without saying that in medicine, what standards there are, are European and not national. One may talk of an Indian school of medicine, but not of a Russian. The necessary stimulus of criticism is, then, always present, for the discoveries and researches of Russians can always be attached and related to those of other European doctors. Hence it is that in what is classed under the general term of "science," Russians have become as prominent as any other nation in Europe.

Perhaps the general effect on Russian thought

of the autocratic administration is best seen in an examination of the course of Russian literature. We find that the dawn and noon of letters followed the entrance and establishment of Russia in European politics, while its retirement behind its own borders in the nineteenth century and its melancholy realisation of its land-locked helplessness had their immediate effect upon literature.

As we know, Peter the Great made Russia a European great nation in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The dawn of Russian letters soon followed. Lomonósov (1711–1765), professor, poet and prose-writer, is esteemed as the "father of the Russian language." His work is too severe and heavy to be interesting for present-day readers. Another significant figure, whose credit is more as a pioneer than as an artist, is the poet Derzhávin (1743–1816), who showed the possibilities of Russian verse and prosody.

The first author who has actually a great artistic value of his own is Denis Von Vízin (1745–1792), the "father of the Russian stage" and its Sheridan. He wrote two excellent

comedies, *The Brigadier* (1766) and *The Minor* (1782), and a short farce, *The Choice of a Tutor* (1792). His characters are all Russian types of his time—ignorant and greedy serf-owners and their sons, "lads," as one character describes them, "with golden coats and leaden heads"; opposed to these are charming young ladies and a type of dignified and frank gentleman, who is thought to be a picture of Von Vízin's own father.

If Von Vízin furnished the first Russian literary characters, it is the merit of Karamzín (1766–1826) to have perfected a Russian prose style. His "Letters from Abroad" are as limpid and readable as any in Russian literature. He established the first Russian literary review, with a circulation of 300. Krylóv (1769–1844) wrote fables in verse, some of which have never been surpassed in wit and style.

The works of these men were the dawn of Russian letters. There had been previously schools of chronicles and ballads, but they were purely local in character. At the time they wrote, Russia was one of the most

promising nations in Europe. Everything seemed possible to it. But the French Revolution was a shock for the liberalism of its monarchs; the rise of Napoleon out of the Revolution was another, and his invasion of Russia and burning of Moscow completed their disillusionment with the West. Slowly it came home to them that their position in the world was false. They were not, after all, an independent power in Europe, but even their approaches to it were controlled by their neighbours. All the good-will and energy Russia had hitherto shown towards the acquirement of European culture was now turned inwards. What was known as a strictly national tradition in literature sprang up; this as time went on became more and more intensely Chauvinist and ever less tolerant of European standards. Zhukóvsky (1783–1852) in his later work may be said to be the originator of this narrowly national style in literature, a style which presents only the least interest to the European reader. We understand by the distinction of narrowly national and European art that the former is to be fully appreciated only by its

own native readers; the latter, on the other hand, has equal significance for readers of every nationality. Byron, for instance, is not only English, he is European in his significance. Shakespeare is not only European, he is universal. Milton, however, is not appreciated by foreign readers, however excellent the translation of his works may be, to any extent corresponding with his position in English letters.

After Zhukóvsky commences an epoch of Chauvinist Russian literature. The old European order died hard. Griboyédov (1795–1829) did not conclude his famous comedy, *Woe from Wit*, until 1824, and, but for the essentially Russian nature of its characters and action, the play might have been produced at the zenith of any European art. It is conceived in that "brilliant common-sense" which we may regard as the determinant quality of European literature. In the work of Pushkin (1799–1837), Lérmontov (1814–1841), and Gogol (1809–1852), the gradual victory of the Chauvinist spirit over the European may be traced. It is not a continuous change; the powers of the rival

influences increased and diminished, but in the end the lesser triumphed and an era of provincialism began, which has continued to this day. The provincial element of mutual admiration is supreme, consequent upon the lack of native critical standards and the rejection of those of the West. Criticism is still regarded in Russia as a friendly and not as a purely objective office. The fate of Volínsky is significant. His attacks in a review on the classic Russian critics led to its entire loss of circulation and abandonment, although it is mentioned by able foreign critics as the best review of its time. Volínsky found himself barred from all Russian journals without exception, a boycott which, led by the principal Liberal papers, continued without a truce for twenty-five years. During this time Volínsky won a name as a writer and critic in Italy, but only since the outbreak of this war has he been invited to write again in the Russian papers.

Only great genius could rise above this provincialism, and the pre-eminence of their work in a society where every mediocrity was acclaimed, is one of the clearest signs of the

superlative excellence of Dostoiévsky (1818–1881), Goncharóv (1812–1891), Turgéniev (1818–1883), and Tolstoi (1828–1910).

To take an example of the conflicting tendencies in the work of these writers, we may observe that, though Goncharóv's *Oblómov* is written in four parts in the original, the translations of it into both French and English comprise only the first part. The interest, in fact, of Goncharóv's work for European readers does not survive the first quarter of his greatest book. Even the giants Dostoiévsky and Tolstoi are always exotic to us, and they, with Turgéniev and Goncharóv, represent the highest developments of the Chauvinist Russian genius. The army of books, pamphlets, and articles that have been written round their work makes it unnecessary for us to go into detail in regard to them.

A few words may be said of their modern descendants. They have no desire to go outside the groove in which they find themselves, and even in this they are dwarfed by the genius of their predecessors. There is not a line in all the work of Gorki (the best of them), Kúprin

Andréyev, Sologúb, Rémizov, or any other of the fashionable novelists of to-day, which is fit to stand beside the achievements of the four great writers of the 'seventies. They are like men continuing to work a mine from which all the gold has long been extracted. A healthy criticism in Russia would sweep their pretences away, but that does not exist.

The tide of Russian literature, as we have seen, has concurred at previous crises so exactly with the political phases of the nation that we might expect to find some development in modern Russian letters corresponding to the re-entry of Russia into European affairs. Just as this last has been conditioned by association with France and England, we might even expect to find a type of literature progressing on parallel lines. We are not disappointed; there is certainly a new impulse in Russian literature. The first sign of it appears in the work of the satirist Saltikóv (1826–1889), the significance of which has as yet hardly been recognised by the Russians themselves. The whole of his work is conceived in the French mould, while the peculiarly English charac-

teristic is the implied good-will on the part of the reader. His direct descendant was Chéhov (1860–1904). It is curious that the writings for which Chéhov is now so well known form the Chauvinist portion of his work, as, for example, his longer plays and stories. It is not too much to say that he is read, not as a natural, but as an exotic writer. That of his work which is a development of Saltikóv's, and forms a bridge between contemporary Russian and European literature, is almost unread. Chéhov was influenced very considerably by French models, to whom he had been attracted in his study of medicine—a profession, as we pointed out, peculiarly susceptible to European influences.

There is, however, nothing in Chéhov's work that would justify an attempt to create a reputation for him as a great writer. The main value of it was that it helped to re-establish permanently in Russian literature the European spirit, which, after it had died down, with Griboyédov, its last complete representative, flickered up again in the spirit of satire. Gogol's *Dead Souls* especially contains it,

but its influence becomes more and more obscured towards the end of that work by the opposite Chauvinist interest.

The death of Chéhov left three writers who seemed, amid the general mediocrity, to hold some promise of developing a European art; these were Artsibáshev, Merezhkóvski, and Evréinov. Artsibáshev has been undeservedly unlucky in his career. With great technical talents, he was always a little before the times with his work. Books of his, in many ways clairvoyant and prophetic, were denied publication until they came true, when they were issued with all the other volumes the events had called forth. The effect of this process on Artsibáshev seems to have been a gradual decadence. With no critics to appreciate the larger merits of his style, he has degenerated more and more into the current popular style of his contemporaries.

Merezhkóvski, too, possessed technical skill and a certain independence of style. Either from want of intelligent criticism or from lack of real genius, he has degenerated into a second-rate writer, a second-rate idealist of a

new Christianity, and a second-rate critic of modern events. His significance now is solely that he has never quite written himself into the vulgar groove of his contemporaries.

Far more extraordinary is the career of Evréinov, the dramatist. His work, from a few unpretentious miracle-plays written in 1900 to the production of his *Merry Death* in 1908, showed a steady rise in style and technique. The *Merry Death*, in fact, is of such excellence as to rank in Russian literature as the best dramatic work since *Woe from Wit*. The spirit of the play is completely European. It is sad to record that Evréinov's work has since shown a gradual falling-off. His most recent work, in fact, is almost a facsimile of his earliest miracle-plays, with the significant difference that, whereas those were mediæval European in character, his newest "Monodramas," written round his own ego and its concepts, represent a direct plunge into the opposite camp of the narrowly Russian school. It has only to be observed that while Evréinov's best plays passed almost unrecognised, his later and inferior work has won him a certain

popularity. He again is a writer whom criticism might have saved.

Still another result of the suppression and atrophy of criticism in Russia is the decay of humour. The fine wit manifested in Russian works conceived in the European spirit is entirely absent in the narrowly national genius, and Russian humour of to-day is a sad mixture of pointlessness and vulgarity. A foreign reader of any taste must turn with contempt even from the least bad of contemporary Russian humorous literature or plays. It is, perhaps, not too much to hope that the successful conduct of this war in alliance with England and France will restore in Russia the desire for a revival of criticism, coincident with a new political independence in Europe. A new school of Russian literature in the European style opens up wonderful possibilities.

THE RUSSIAN CHARACTER

CHAPTER VII

THE RUSSIAN CHARACTER

THE history of the Russian Empire is of such recent beginning that as yet the final definition of the national character is not only difficult, but it is impossible. There seems no doubt that it differs profoundly from that of every other European nation, and, in this sense, it may be said to be the dark horse of Europe. But we know neither its colour nor its powers. What it will become depends as much upon future circumstances as upon the character itself.

Many attempts have been made nevertheless to sum up in a phrase or two the essential character of the Russian people, and to some of them we shall refer in the course of this chapter. But while every attempt hitherto at a single definition has failed, it would appear that nothing but failure can be expected until

Russia achieves its immediate geographical mission of self-deliverance into the world.

The theory of the determinant effect of a political entity upon the individual entities of its citizens may, at first sight, seem unprovable. But it will bear considering, and, on thought, we seem bound to accept it. For what else but its tacit acceptance accounts for the general preoccupation of men of all nations with politics? At once, however, the great difficulty arises in attempting to deal with the Russian character. Russia is not yet what it is destined to be, and the Russian character is not yet fixed. All other European nations are fully defined. The more they change, the more they remain the same. An Englishman, wherever found, is always an Englishman, an Italian always an Italian, a Pole always an Irishman; but a Russian appears to change almost with geography. This is true, even physiognomically. Not only are we impeded by the relative youth and rawness of the Russian character, but we are bound to take into account an element we have already several times referred to. Force of circumstances has

warped the normal growth of the Russian character and driven it in false directions. We may recall how the effect of the land-locking of Russia reacts on the temper of the individual. The intelligent Russian, realising, consciously or not, in what a humiliating position Russia stands to the rest of Europe, and baffled in his desire to pass through the ring, is transformed to an intellectual monster—a mental hunchback. Clearly, then, not only is Russia not yet what it is destined to be, but much of what it now is it will, with freedom, cease to be. Hence it is that every attempt at present to make a final definition of the Russian character is doomed to be, at best, a happy guess which time alone can confirm.

Only a few landmarks can guide us in our search for a key to the national character. First, there should be certain characteristics which everybody acquainted with Russia remarks. Again, there is the career of Peter the Great, significant as a Russian who did pass freely into Europe. Thirdly, if we wish to avoid the more obvious psychological effects of the landlockedness of Russia on the national

intelligence, we may turn to the peasantry, who may be supposed to be less markedly deformed by such subtleties. On the other hand, such a course lays us open to the further difficulty that many other equally accidental but more immediate externalities—administration, climate, soil or even food—will have impressed their mark upon the peasant mind. Only by a delicate co-ordination of these data can we hope to avoid partial and false judgments. Many previous observers have been too apt not to probe carefully the various layers of the superficies, differing as they do in every class and locality of the people; but we must be on our guard, if we are to arrive at the real national characteristic underlying all.

We cannot pretend to be exhaustive, but among the phases of the Russian character that are generally remarked may be said to be melancholy and inertia, broadness of mind and manners, stoicism and devotion. (It is curious, and perhaps will later be found significant, that Russians, endeavouring to describe the national characteristics, will always add hospitality to the list, a virtue which to us seems credit-

able but unimportant.) We should, however, not be accurate if we did not admit that other observers have been equally insistent that precisely opposite traits are visible in the Russian character—spontaneity, bigotry, treachery, etc. Most impartial foreign observers have had at last to admit the existence of these contrasts and inconsistencies.

So rare is the critical faculty in Russia that nearly every native definition of the Russian character offers no more than a reflection of the author's relation to the chief political problem of the Empire. If he is a Slavophil, he will gloss over all suggestions that the Russian character presents discrepancies and will endeavour to gather all its manifestations together under one bizarre roof. He will say, for instance, with Sologúb, that Russia is not European at all, but belongs to the mysterious East, with Confucius, Plato and Christ as its forerunners. Or, if this "Panmongolism" does not appeal to him, he may suggest, with Merezhkóvski, that Russia is essentially feminine in character: "The Teuto-Latin West is masculine, the Slav-Russian East is feminine.

We know of the world what other peoples do not know—that the world is peace, not war and hate, but eternal love, and eternal womanhood." In support of this theory, other Russians have pointed out that Russia has never possessed that essentially masculine manifestation of Western European nations, a knighthood, and that, for her rulers, she has often been content to invite and submit to foreign princes, Scandinavian or German.

A still more popular native notion is that Russia is the land of Christ. One old writer said: "Europe is a pagan, Russia a holy Christian." Mr. Stephen Graham, more Russian than the Russians, has assured us that all the best in their culture and life is based on their Christianity. The difficulty this theory meets with is that it cannot entirely deny the claim of other European nations to be Christian also. The only alternative is that once suggested by a Russian: to perfect a new interpretation of Christ and establish a new Christianity.

Two main objections may be raised to these and similar Slavophil theories. The first is

that they attempt to explain one unknown, the Russian character, in terms of other unknowns: Asiaticism, femininity, Christianity or Byzantinism. Secondly, though we have one representative Russian eternally before us, the Slavophils continue to theorise as if Peter the Great had never lived. They may hate or belittle him, but they cannot deny that pre-eminently he was neither Asiatic, nor feminine, nor Christian, but—Russian! We must carry our inquiry further.

Most foreign observers and Russians under the influence of foreign thought have made it a habit to explain the Russian character as almost entirely a synthesis of the effects of natural conditions. In the case of a country so extensive and various as Russia, we need hardly say that the method is simplicity itself. First we are told that the country is divided into two sharply contrasted strata, and that the forest-dweller in the north is essentially phlegmatic, while the plain-dweller of the south is by nature emotional. Then there is the effect of the long and severe winter, producing in the Russian, according

to some judges, inertia, according to others, initiative. Whichever decision we adopt, we cannot deny that the hot summer must create a contrasted set of effects upon the national character. Nor are forgotten the various results of the quick transition from winter to summer, and these are contrasted with the slow return from summer to winter. As all these phenomena, opposite in themselves, are supposed to react in opposite ways upon the forest-dweller and the plain-dweller, it is obvious that the observer who proceeds on these lines is soon furnished with a sufficient number of contrasted types to explain away not only Russia, but the whole world. Sometimes this idea occurs to the critic and he is amazed that one nation can produce so many contrasted types and characteristics. Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace called Russia a "land of paradoxes," and Leroy-Beaulieu, by a protracted application of this method, established what he called a "law of contrast" as dominating the Russian character. He even quotes Peter the Great with his "open mind and cunning hand" as an illustration of this law; but surely we may

once again claim that in Peter was something underlying his politics and his dentistry, something deeper, something, we repeat, essentially Russian.

Other critics have endeavoured in other ways to define the character of the Russian. One has suggested that the nature of every Russian can be dissolved into solutions of the following three types: Peter the Great, Hléstakov, the braggart hero of *The Reviser*, and Mýshkin, Dostoiévsky's naïve and gentle "Idiot," in comparison with whose folly the wisest of men seem fools.

"For instance," says Mr. Baring, "mix Peter the Great with a sufficient dose of Hléstakov and you get Boris Godunov and Bakúnin; leave the Peter the Great element unmixed, and you get Bazárov and many of Gorki's heroes; mix it slightly with Hléstakov, and you get Lérmontov; let the Hléstakov element predominate, and you get Father Gapon: let it predominate without the dose of Hléstakov, and you get Oblómov." We quote no further, for already most of the examples quoted seem out of place. Let us take the case of Oblómov,

which would seem fairly correct. Oblómov's apathy, as Mr. Baring says elsewhere, is "that of a brain seething with the burning desires of a *vie intime*, which all come to nothing owing to a kind of spiritual paralysis, 'une infirmité morale!'" We may once again point out that Oblómov is the incarnation of Russia as "the Hamlet of the nations." The Peter the Great in him is overshadowed by inertia. Mr. Baring, however, sees him as containing the Peter the Great element overshadowed by Mýshkin. But is it Mýshkin? The characteristic of Mýshkin is a naïve gentleness, but not inertia. What, then, is there of Mýshkin in Oblómov? Again, Mólchalin in *Woe from Wit* is the type of conscienceless lickspittling bureaucrat, and the application to him of the element of Hléstakov predominating over Peter the Great seems absolutely inaccurate. We need, perhaps, quote no more examples to show that Mr. Baring's suggestion, while fanciful and clever, is insufficient to define even the examples he himself gives, not to mention every Russian. If it is objected that we are wrong in taking the elements so nicely, we may reply that if they are taken

broadly, they resolve simply into the energetic man, the rogue and the fool, and, as such, could be combined to include not only every Russian but most mortal men.

In dismissing Mr. Baring's suggestion, we may remark that we have already seen how Hléstakov and Oblómov are related to Peter the Great and the national character. Hléstakov, we noticed, is the young Russian who does not pull himself together after the first failure before Azov. Oblómov, on the other hand, is too large for this shallow fate and is as Peter the Great was before he decided to force a way to the sea. Oblómov is Peter the Great fâced with the dilemma of 1698-9. One alternative is the reaction of the Streltsi, the other the Utopia of the Westerners. The evil of both courses is apparent, consciously or not, to Oblómov, and he does not see before him the possibility that Peter seized of cutting the Gordian knot. Hence Oblómov's inertia. We are able to see that this inertia is a superimposed intellectual trait, which did not exist in the character of Peter the Great. In fact, it is no part of the Russian character, and with

it may be dismissed the greater portion of the melancholy and sluggishness which are usually regarded as inherently Russian.

The Danish critic, Georg Brandes, has attempted more carefully than most observers to understand the Russian character. He has not been content with either the effects of climate or the traditional Slav melancholy, but has endeavoured to discover some more fundamental trait. He was struck particularly by the "sound common-sense" and the "broad nature" of the Russians, though he cannot deny that they are notorious also for what would appear the exact opposite, the frequent preference of blind faith to logic. He does not disguise his confusion and his *Impressions of Russia* conclude in a fog of unreasoned optimism: "Black land, fertile land, new land, grain land, the broadly constituted rich, warm nature, . the broad, unlimited expanse which fills the mind with melancholy and hope, the incomprehensible, darkly mysterious, the womb of new realities and new mysticism, . Russia and the future." It is difficult to reach any critical conclusions on such lines.

Nevertheless it is curious to compare the blind optimism of Brandes with the well-known quatrain of the poet, Tiútchev, who said that Russia was no ordinary land, to be measured with a foot-rule; in Russia one can have only faith. Turgéniev, also, said that a nation with a language so noble, robust and free as the Russian, must itself be great. This confidence in the fundamental excellence of the Russian character, held, as we see, by Slavophil, Westerner and foreigner alike, is an encouragement to us to delve even deeper beneath the surface.

At risk of inconsistency, since we have declared that a definition of the Russian character at this stage is impossible, we may make a suggestion.

The Russian is essentially—humane. The general prejudice, perhaps, is just the reverse. "We have invented nothing but the knout," said Turgéniev. Let us put our case in more detail. Russians have vast sympathy. This is particularly obvious in their literature, to take an example with which we are already familiar. Hunchbacks themselves, as we have seen, in-

tellectually, the sympathies of Russian authors are constantly shown to the unfortunate of the world, the despised and rejected—as Russia has been despised and rejected. This tendency to analyse the outcast is not morbid in the Russian writers of genius, whatever it may become in their inferior modern imitators. The cripple in Russian literature is, in fact, a new manifestation of an old humaneness. The type does not occur in the golden period of Russian letters, from their dawn to the rise of Chauvinism; nevertheless there is not one character introduced in play, poem or story whose motives are not sympathetically analysed, and who is not put right, as the Russians would say, with God. If he sins, he sins in ignorance or in the inevitability of "original sin."

This same humaneness is evident in Russian customs and manners. We may now recall how the Russians emphasise hospitality as a great feature of their character. In other connections we may remark at random that capital punishment has never been permanently established in Russia, that the Russian Tsar inaugu-

rated the Hague Peace Congress, that public performances with trained animals are prohibited in Russia.—But the knout, it will be objected; how can the knout be reconciled with this humaneness?

Humaneness predicates intense feeling, and to feel intensely, as the Russians do, is to be subject to every wind that blows. They are the most impressionable people in the world; impelled by an idea, they fly to extremes. For they have no judgment. We have seen the oppression to which literary criticism has been subject, but not even this would have been sufficient to destroy it, had it not already been a weakling. But where then is the Russian common-sense, which has been so much admired by Brandes and other observers?

It rarely exists, but when found (as it was in Peter the Great) it becomes a fit object for admiration. When, indeed, this common-sense is enabled to exist, when it can be joined to the national characteristic of intense sympathy, it is like a house built upon a rock, for it is the conjunction of judgment with intuition, and thus

the highest development of European intelligence. But, as a rule, this organ of judgment dares not develop, lest it be goaded into madness. Hence it is that Russia shows us either types with atrophied wills (Mýshkin, Oblómov, Mólchalin) or wills distorted into terrible deformities (Tolstoi and Gogol, at the end of their lives). The Russian, indeed, has developed further than he dared; and, as things are, he cannot keep pace with himself. At present, as we see, save in rare cases, his ideal is to be a Mýshkin, a "God's fool," wiser than the wise, but, in his happy ignorance of the world, unable to control or explain his wisdom.

At present, the Russian uses a standard of values he cannot describe. When he makes an attempt to define it, he is usually either unintelligible or absurd. With perfect taste he develops Russian ballet; to explain his taste to the world, he builds—the Moscow Art Theatre! And when the Russian acts upon his intuition silently, he is slandered as crafty and cunning. Mýshkin, we may recall, was called Jesuitical, overbearing and deceitful.

The great need of the Russian is, we see, the development of judgment. It is a melancholy position to be clairvoyant and not to be able to interpret the visions. While Russia remains the handmaid of Europe, she is never likely to make this development. But if, with this war, she becomes a free nation, she may well become the interpreter of culture to Europe.

THE CHURCH AND RUSSIA

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH AND RUSSIA

So many Western Europeans think the Russian Church has vast influence over the people that even some Russians have come to believe it. Actually it is an error, and as such has been exposed time and again by the better authorities on Russian life. This is not to say that there are no devout people in Russia; on the contrary, these are no fewer, perhaps more, than in any other country. But, as a rule, even these have no respect for the church itself as a sacred body. There are a few instances of priests who have led great religious revivals within the church. Such was Father John of Cronstadt, who, it seems probable, really did possess certain powers of healing, and was a pious and devout man.

There are many reasons for the decline of church influence in Russia. So far as concerns

the more intelligent classes, the modern political developments of the church are a sufficient explanation. Before Peter the Great, Russia was a hierarchy, wherein the interests of the church stood above those of the state. Peter not only changed this, by refusing to appoint a new patriarch in 1700, but, twenty years later, he transformed the church into a minor organ of the bureaucracy. The establishment of the Holy Synod made the church government subordinate to the authority of a layman Procurator, appointed by the Tsar and responsible to him alone. From one point of view, the church has not suffered so much as might appear; its incorporation in the bureaucracy brought it security from attack. Such attacks now came to be regarded as attacks upon the autocracy, and the whole powers of the state were directed against them. The church was never called upon to reform itself or to remodel its ceremonies, which still continue in all their Byzantine barbarity. The new position of the church has given it also a powerful supporter in the Slavophil, who upholds it as a Muscovite manifestation. Certainly nothing but

political expediency could have made a man like Dostoiévsky support it so vigorously.

It goes without saying that the church is anathema to the reformer. To him everything about it bears the stigma of barbarity, obscurantism and reaction. Again, its place in the bureaucracy forces him to regard the church as a kind of official supervisor of the people; the village priest, from a servant of God, has degenerated into an agent of the police.

This is how the educated Russians, conservative and liberal, regard the church. The attitude of the peasant is different. In England, as we know, the parson's education is the bulwark of the church, but in Russia the distinction between priest and peasant hardly exists. The "little father" is very much the same as any of his congregation, and he is dependent on their good-will for his existence. Rejected, or in rare cases barely tolerated by the intelligence of the country, even the highest branches of the church have to make their appeal to its sole supporter, the peasant. Every Easter, for example, at Jerusalem a "miracle" takes place. A Russian priest places two

torches in clefts in the wall of the Holy Sepulchre and they burst into flame. The village priest has not these opportunities, and, in his intimate connections with his congregation, his failings become all the more obvious. The peasants know who bribed him, whom he tried to cheat, and when he was last seen drunk and misbehaving publicly. Beyond material sustenance, the priest receives little from the peasants. Devout these may be, but their respect for the church is only the fruit of early instruction. They cross themselves from habit of the same nature as induces a groom to chew a straw. For them the holy picture in the corner of their huts is far more sacred than all the living dignitaries of the church. These they think of as hungry wolves barring the road to God, to be fed and feared—but not respected.

The devoutness of the Russian people and the low prestige of the official church offer a vast opportunity to the sectarian. Every form of religious aberration has appeared at some time in Russia, and in most cases its doctrines have been maintained on an over-literal interpretation of Biblical texts. There is no need

to describe these sects and the circumstances in which they arise, but Artsibáshev has a story, which would seem to be founded on fact, of a village of political exiles in Siberia relapsing into idolatry.

Charlatans, too, are sometimes met with. To the peasant it is only natural that a truly holy man should be outside the church, or even actively opposed to it. But, as we know, any unofficial religious revival on a large scale is liable to be met with all the power of the law. It is not merely a coincidence that Tolstoi was excommunicated by the church and the publication of many of his works forbidden by the police. The result is that religious charlatanry is less frequent than sincere sectarianism.

It is indeed rarely that a charlatan succeeds in frightening the church into making its peace with him; but such has occurred within the last twelvemonth, in the case of Raspútin. The career of this person is curious. He was born forty-three years ago in a small Siberian village, the son of a peasant of bad reputation. His first public appearances were as defendant in two charges of horse-theft and perjury. The

first case was never decided, but for the second Raspútin was flogged. He became a lay-brother in a neighbouring monastery, and began to wander through the villages collecting for the erection of a church. He built himself a house with the proceeds, and seems, in some way, to have come under the notice of a bishop and a countess. They began to make him known as a mystic, somewhat to his confusion. "They're writing all sorts of things about me," he said, "but I am really just an ordinary man." He has been traced from this period to the house of a rich merchant's wife of Perm, who took him to Moscow, and introduced him there to the rich bourgeoisie. The widow of a royal governor of Moscow is supposed to have elevated Raspútin to the highest circles at Moscow and at Petrograd, and for years now he has occupied a most prominent position at Court. He is often seen carrying the young Cesarevich on his shoulder, and has unimpeded access to the parents. His whereabouts are kept secret; all references to him in the press are forbidden by the censor. He is supposed to travel largely in Siberia, but it is probable that on these occa-

sions an imperial motor-car fetches him away unobtrusively to the Court.

Naturally the most contradictory legends have grown round his personality. While by some he is imagined to represent the lowest type of erotic charlatanism, others have supposed that he is really a man of supernatural gifts. The fact that practically nobody whose judgment could be depended upon had ever met Raspútin made an explanation of his mysterious influence still more difficult.

The present writer determined to discover what sort of a man Raspútin is. It was not easy to find his address or, when this was known, to enter his carefully guarded presence. However, a conversation was arranged. Raspútin was clad as a peasant. His face is of a low type, and his eyes keen but cunning. Using the antiquated church Russian of the priests mingled with peasant colloquialisms, he began to speak of Christian love. It was interesting to observe that in the motions of his hands and arms were some clumsy hypnotic passes. The conversation turned upon death. "It's life, brother, life," cried Raspútin. "Dost think

God created us to live only forty years?" Then, in a sepulchral voice, to denote prophecy, he said: "Brother, pray for thy father and mother, and thou shalt have eternal life in Heaven!" We kissed each other very devotedly and parted. It was obvious that he possesses some not inconsiderable hypnotic powers, and concentration was necessary to overcome his influence, even though he was making no real hypnotic effort. These powers and his erotic vocabulary probably explain the influence he has come to possess over the ladies of the Russian Court.

Certainly he owes nothing to superhuman intelligence. Only vanity could have induced him to allow the recent publication of one of his diaries. It was, however, obvious that he is extremely proud of the book, and he even gave the present writer a written authorisation to translate it into English. The book is entitled *My Thoughts and Reflections*, and is described as a "short description of a journey to the Holy Land, and topical reflections on religious questions. Petrograd, 1915."

It commences with a description of Ras-

pútin's journey to Odessa, and enters upon a "short description of the sea."

"What can I say of my calm? As soon as I sailed out of Odessa upon the Black Sea, there was calm upon the sea, and the soul rejoices and sleeps in calm; the little wavelets glitter in the sight like gold, and there is no need to look for more. There's an example from God, how precious is the human soul; is it not a pearl, that even the sea is for it?

"The sea comforts without any effort. When you get up in the morning, the waves talk and splash and rejoice. And the sun glitters on the sea, just quietly—quietly it rises and at that time the soul of man forgets all human things and looks at the sunshine; and gladness is kindled in man, and in the soul is perceived the book of life and the wisdom of life—indescribable beauty! The sea rouses from the sleep of cares, one thinks very much of one's own accord, without any effort.

"The sea is spacious, but the mind is yet more spacious.

"There is no end to human wisdom, incom-

prehensible to all philosophers. . . . The waves rolled upon the sea, and a disturbance commenced in the soul. Man loses the form of consciousness and goes as in a mist—O God, give peace to the soul!

"On the sea there is temporary illness, but there are always such waves upon the land. On the sea the illness is seen by all, but on shore nobody knows, the devil confounds the soul.

"Conscience is the wave; whatever waves may be upon the sea grow calm; but conscience disappears only from a good deed."

Then follows a "short description of Constantinople," with thoughts upon St. Sophia.

"Like a cloud on the horizon, so is St. Sophia.

"O misery! How the Lord is angry with our pride, that he gave over the Sanctity to the impious Turks and offered his Countenance to scorn and contumely—they smoke there!"

The journey continues, Raspútin gets his sea-legs and begins to look about him:—

"I met many people, but especially in the

third class were many true Christian women; they suffer and pray perpetually, and read litanies morning and evening; you look at them and do not tire.

"And I saw Bulgarian women verily comprehending God's Empire, really peace-bearers, beloved of Christ.

"I realised this, that Turks wear the same clothes as Christians and Jews. The fulfilment of God's word upon us may be awaited, that there will be a united Orthodox Church, in spite of the apparent difference of dress.

"Already they have abolished this difference, and afterwards the difference in faith will pass also; it is hard to understand all this. At the beginning all strangers will be tempted by the dress, and afterwards from them will be a United Church."

His topographical descriptions are perfunctory, and the main part of his notes is devoted to pseudo-philosophic observation.

"Smyrna is situated on the coast of Asia Minor, at the end of the huge Gulf of Smyrna.

"In Smyrna there are a few beautiful Greek

temples. One of them is at the place where the Samaritan woman conversed with Jacob about the Saviour and believed in Him.

"What antiquities are preserved among the Turks! How can one explain that the Turks have everything, all antiquity; what can one say except it were better if they had one spirit with us and one Orthodox Church?"

At last Raspútin reaches Jaffa and Jerusalem, and enters the Holy Sepulchre:

"I finished my journey, and arrived at the Holy City by the high road.

* * * * *

"As we passed from the great waves to the earthly paradise of calm, first of all prayer was offered up.

"I cannot describe here my impression of joy; ink is powerless—it is impossible; yes, and the tears flow from every worshipper with joy. On the one hand the soul is singing ever, 'The Lord hath arisen,' and on the other hand it remembers the great agony of the Lord: the Lord suffered here. O, how one sees the Lord's Mother at the Cross! You picture it all so

plainly, and how for our sake He came to be in agony.

"O Lord, one walks and thinks and the agony comes and one sees—the same sort of people walk as then, wear cloaks and the strange garb of the Old Testament; just as it is now, everything was then. And there—tears flow, the days pass, Lent comes on—you go out of the temple, and in these temples all those great events took place and the Saviour Himself shed tears.

* * * * *

"What shall I say of that moment, when I approached the Sepulchre of Christ?

"I felt that the Tomb was a tomb of love, and felt such a sensation that I was ready to caress everybody; and such was my love for them that they all seemed to me as saints, because love sees no defects at all in people. There at the Sepulchre you see all people holy in heart, loving their friends; and they far away at home feel themselves rejoiced."

Raspútin takes the opportunity to work off an old grudge against the monks of Mount Athos.

"Wine is sold as much as you like, and is drunk because it is cheap. The monks from Mount Athos do this most; therefore they should not be let go there. Many of them live unknown to Jerusalem; it is not expedient to explain, but who has been there, he knows."

He wanders to Jericho and Bethany and Bethlehem with similar comments.

"How much dearer to a man is one little crust of bread than a great ship! And how much money a ship costs! Who understandeth this, his is understanding."

The diary continues with the observation that the Catholics observe Easter with long faces, and hence deduces the future triumph of the joyful Orthodox Church.

The naïveté of the concluding sentence: "How many saints we have!—a thousand men of God!" reminds us of the satirical remark of an old-time Russian that the monks believe God and the saints talk only Russian in Heaven. Indeed, the book never reaches a higher level than this. It amply demonstrates that Raspútin possesses no miraculous intellectual

powers. His power, however, is supreme. Last autumn the village comrade of his early debauches, a certain Varnáva, raised by Raspútin's influence to a bishopric, was arraigned before the Holy Synod on a charge of maltreating nuns and canonising a local saint on his own insufficient authority. He was found guilty, but managed, on various pretexts (such as, that the Procurator had once sat down while he, the bishop, was standing), to have the passing of the sentence postponed a few days. In the meantime, Raspútin prevailed upon the supreme authorities, by his personal influence, to dismiss both the Procurator of the Synod and the Home Minister. In alarm, the Holy Synod accepted Varnáva's apologies and withdrew the charge. After a farewell carouse with Raspútin and the author Kúprin, the worthy bishop departed triumphantly to his see. Conservatives and liberals alike united in expressions of sympathy with the disgraced Procurator, and the Moscow Town Council even caused a holy picture to be presented to him as a token of gratitude for his determined and fatal opposition to the

"dark and sinister forces threatening the integrity and life of the Russian Empire and the Orthodox Church"—in short, to Raspútin.

It would seem impossible for the Russian church ever to survive the disgrace of its ignominious humiliation before Raspútin.

THE RUSSIAN AT HOME

CHAPTER IX

THE RUSSIAN AT HOME

WITH the country population so overwhelmingly outnumbering the townsfolk, we should do wrong not to devote a chapter to the country life of Russia. Nine Russians out of every ten are permanently settled on the land, and of the rest only the most unhappy portion of the population, the proletariate of the few large towns, is permanently divorced from it. Otherwise all the rich or moderately well off townsfolk have their estates or villas in the countryside, whither they seize every opportunity to go. Let us try to give some impression of what we might see in winter of Russian country life.

The train will halt at one of the little stations placed every ten or twenty miles along the track. On the platform are the stationmaster and his assistant; one or two peasants stare vacantly in their sheepskins; a couple of Jews

await customers, or agents for their sawmills; and perhaps the local doctor and engineer in their official caps are chatting and drinking tea. Outside the station, a sledge is waiting for us. If our host keeps up the old customs, it will be a tróika, that is, a vehicle drawn by a span of three horses. The winter snow lies deep over everything; the roads can be distinguished only by the discoloration of their frozen surface. One, obviously much used, leads off to the town, which may lie several miles from the station. Our road leads another way. Our driver wraps the rugs round us, adjusts his own and cracks his whip. The sledge starts to slide over the hard frozen road. The horses get into their stride; the two at the sides break into a canter, but the centre one remains in a fast and powerful trot. The cold wind buffets our faces and we hurriedly turn up our fur collars and fasten the flaps of our lined hats over our ears. A jolt, and we pass over the railway-line, and head off for our destination. We enter the woods. While we were in the open, it was difficult to gauge our speed by observing any object in the surrounding waste

of snow; now, as we recline in the low sledge, we see the trees rushing past. Snow drops from their branches; the horses kick up little clots of ice, which sometimes strike us painfully in the face. It is too cold and breathless to talk. We pass through miles of this cold, white forest. Sometimes we scramble down and up the slopes of a little ravine, sometimes we cross the ice of a river; at last we pass out of the woods and come to signs of habitation. We cross a bridge, and a road between two fences leads us to a mill. As the tróika rushes by, the miller and his wife open their door to look at the master's guests. The road by the mill is sure to be bad and the sledge thunders and rolls and jerks us from side to side. We hurry up a hill and pass a cemetery, over which rise a dozen huge pines, the only trees left in this wilderness of snow-bound meadow. There are fences on either side of us now, as our horses draw us steadily over the brow of the rise. We look before us. Far in front we see a low wooded mound, with a bright blue pear-shaped church tower standing over it. Among those trees, our driver tells

us, is our hosts' house with its garden. All round the mound, and stretching perhaps a mile on each side of it, are the rows of solitary, snow-covered peasants' huts.

We canter along and at last pass a few of these huts and turn off the main track into an avenue. We pass some paddocks and out-buildings, where we can see the cattle herded, and rows of stables, through another gate, and we see the manor-house before us.

It is a long, rambling one-storied building, wooden and many-windowed. Beside it and opposite are kitchens and barns, surrounding the central court, into which we drive. We draw up at the steps of the door and our coachman beats off with his whip three or four lean, howling watch-dogs who have rushed out at us. The door opens and a "lackey," as he is called, hurries down to undo our wraps and invite us in. We take off our furs in the ante-chamber, and he ushers us into the large hall, which forms the chief room of the house. It is a long, low-ceilinged room, full of pictures, cabinets, and tables and old sofas and chairs, the upholstering of these often threadbare and

shabby, and each one different from the others. Double doors lead out of the hall into the dining-room, and other doors into bedrooms. The lackey takes us into a long corridor, on either side of which we see the doors of other rooms. He takes us each to our room. We enter. The double windows are firmly closed against the air; a huge white stove, stoked from the corridor, heats the room. There is a nondescript miscellany of furniture, a holy picture, a portrait of Peter the Great, and a couple of dog-eared French novels, fifty years old, on the table.

The servant taps on the door. "Master, be pleased to dine." We pass along the corridor, to the hall and into the dining-room. Our hosts greet us and introduce us by our Christian name and father's Christian name to their other guests. Thus, if your name is, say, Alfred, and your father's Ernest, you are introduced as Alfred Ernest-ovich. The ladies are introduced similarly, and we find ourselves at first somewhat confused at addressing an old dowager as Tatiána Vladimír-ovna—Tatiána, daughter of Vladimír.

As eating is the main occupation of the country gentry, the dinner is solid and long. A glass or two of vodka as an appetiser, and the numerous hors d'œuvre are brought in. We make a good meal of these, and are warmly pressed to try a plate or two of soup. There follows a varied menu, composed almost entirely of the products of the estate. Everything on the table is home-made, from the bread to the vinegar, and the table itself was made by the estate carpenter. After dinner we return to the hall and there either we play whist or cribbage or patience, or tell fortunes by cards, or a young lady sings, or a gramophone is set at work. About nine o'clock we gather in again to the dining-room for a last cup of tea. Our post-boy whom, if we want the mail, we must send daily to the nearest town, gallops up with letters and three day old Petrograd and Moscow papers. Soon a peasant girl comes bare-foot into the room and tells the ladies their rooms are ready. Half an hour later the house is fast asleep.

We rise, perhaps, early in the morning, and the lackey, whom we discover collarless and

bare-foot cleaning the hall, sends for a groom to saddle a horse. The soft snow rises to our horse's knees, and it is a dozen degrees below freezing-point; but we pass beyond the out-buildings and come into the village. Barely a soul is to be seen; a few children, a few chickens and pigs gaze up at us curiously and curs snap at us. The men have already gone into the forest to work; the women are busy inside the huts. We pass the last hut and turn into the forest. New snow has covered the paths, and at last the horse falls up to its belly in a drift. He scrambles out and we look round. Mysterious marks in the snow lead in every direction; we cannot trace our path. We try backwards, but the crunching of under-growth beneath the snow warns us that we are not on any path. We have lost our way.

All round us rise the trees, covered with snow. Everything is white, beneath the grey sky. We nudge our horse into a walk, but we do not know in which direction. The nearest village in front of us may be sixty miles away, for all we know, without a single habitation between. We walk on nervously. Suddenly

the horse pricks up its ears and almost shies, and we see an old sow staring at us from behind a tree. This is good, for it means that a forester lives near. We halloo and search, and find his wooden shanty. He puts us in the right direction and counsels us to hurry straight ahead. The trees lessen and we come to an open space. We are on the edge of the woods, in the meadows of the village commune. A mile or two in front of us is the familiar mound with the blue dome, and the straggling huts all round it. We hit a fresh track, where a peasant's cart has carried in wood, stolen perhaps, and canter off. We arrive before the house, just in time to find our anxious friends seating themselves in three or four double-spanned sledges, to make a search party for the missing guest. We pass into the usual gigantic breakfast. After breakfast comes whist and patience; then lunch, followed by a visit of near neighbours (of twelve miles away), who discuss with us foreign affairs and botany.

Let us imagine a Russian boy, brought up, as so many are, in these surroundings. The solitude, the immensity and the beauty, both in

the snow-deep winter and the golden summer, must attach him to the countryside. The peasants' sons have their school in the village, which they seem to attend irregularly, but the young squire has his French governess and German tutor, and, when he is old enough, a student from the nearest university town is inveigled down to teach him Old Slavonic, Latin, and arithmetic. When he is about twelve, his father, who retired from the Hussars with the rank of colonel after two years' service, takes him into the town and gets him entered in a military college. He receives a cadet's uniform, and, half a dozen years later, passes out as a full-fledged officer, from which rank he soon retires and takes over the control of the family estates.

His brother, say, or his cousin, has no military ambitions, and, instead of the college, he goes to an ordinary school. If his parents have not a house in the town, they have to take a flat for him, and there he lives, ruler of a household consisting of himself, an old housekeeper from the manor-house, a woman cook, engaged in the town itself, and a boy imported from the

village to clean the boots. Between and after school hours, our young gentleman comes home, and the meals are followed by two or three hours' work with a student-tutor, who is expected to make himself agreeable to the old housekeeper in return for an uncontracted helping of the sweet or dessert. The schools are arranged in the mechanical German regimental style and toilful promotion comes only once a year. All the schools are aligned and our young gentleman's progress is, or should be, fixed. He will, however, probably find himself outstripped one day by a lad with a plebeian surname, a "Cobbler" or "Smith," who, on inquiry, turns out to be the son of our hero's cook. While such a repugnant person would never be allowed to enter any of the military colleges, most of the schools are open to him and noble alike. Our young gentleman, thanks to the efforts of his student instructor, passes his final school examination at the age of seventeen or eighteen and considers entering the university.

If he is an extreme liberal in thought, he may decide to enter the medical faculty; if an extreme

bureaucrat, he will study law, but other faculties are open to him. Every student in Russia now is made to work and pass frequent examinations. By his fellows, except he be a law student, he is expected to be an active, even boisterous liberal. We dare not take any interest in our hero's future career, lest we are disappointed with a Hléstakov, insulted with a Mólchalin or saddened with an Oblómov. We may rather consider other aspects of his life.

He is certain to write poetry and, as he is in Russia, to read it aloud publicly, and, as a preparation for this, he will fall in love.

A word or two may be said of Russian women. The enforced melancholy and inertia which have so affected Russian men seem not to have reacted upon the women. Nor have the complexities of modern industrialism, of which at present Russia is almost ignorant, affected them as has been the case among the Western nations. They remain, therefore, the most markedly womanly women in Europe. In consequence, their actual influence is as vast as it is unobtrusive.

The young lady may be a student, for there

are higher schools for women; she may even have been educated at an institute, which (there are thirty-one such in Russia) is an establishment for hereditary noblemen's daughters only. Life is perhaps more conventionalised nowadays in Russia, but such is the contempt for the ceremonies of the church that marriage (there is no civil marriage) is occasionally dispensed with. It would be wrong to say that such unions are encouraged in all circles as absolutely equivalent to legal marriage, but they are not looked on, as in the West, as a sin. Divorce, too, though theoretically almost impossible, is in practice merely a matter of arrangement and no stigma attaches to either party. This doctrine of original sin enters into all Russian life. The bureaucrat, for instance, that is known to take bribes and his wife, treating her friends to excursions and amusement at the public cost, are never held up to public indignation. If they are discovered by the higher authorities, dismissal is looked upon as an over-severe punishment.

Our hero's life will not be complete if, at some time before his university days are over,

he does not visit the Caucasus. Pushkin and Lérmontov were the first Russians to sing of its Kashmirian snows and sub-tropical vales, and every real Russian makes his sentimental journey thither. The sight of the Black Sea will sadden him, but the riches of the Caucasus, especially of the Colchian shore (where the golden fleece was and where the earth even smells green), will recompense his travels.

But we are becoming indelicately inquisitive into the affairs of our typical young Russian, and, after mentioning that he is bound by law to hang out a flag on certain State occasions, we may wish him, in the words of one of Griboyédov's characters, "Good health and a general's rank," and bid him good-bye.

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER X

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

THE significance of the present war cannot be properly appreciated without a consideration of the situation and future of Russia. When, ten years ago, France by her alliance brought Russia into the Western comity of nations, there were observers who doubted, on the one hand, whether this would be good for Russia, and, on the other, whether it would be good for Europe. The former, needless to say, were mainly the Russian Chauvinists and Slavophils who desired to keep Russia to Russia and to turn her attention rather eastwards than westwards. It was obviously to the advantage of Germany, representing as she did the influential middleman between Russia and the West, to keep Russia so far as possible as she was, and to oppose openly and secretly any direct connection between her and the nations of Western

Europe. Thus it came about that Slavophilism, which preached the excellence of insularity, was first taught as a doctrine by a German professor at a German university, and thence imported into Russia.

The critics who distrusted for Europe's sake the entrance of Russia into European councils were, first and foremost, the Liberals of Western Europe. Their apprehension of the reactionary influence association with the Russian autocracy was likely to have upon Liberalism led to an established prejudice against Russia, which even to-day has not quite died out in England.

Without endeavouring in the present little work to trace the gradual dispersal of this fear, it may be fairly conjectured from the absence of any considerable hostile comment, that, by the time of the formation of the present military alliance of Russia, France and England, these apprehensions had largely disappeared. There were, it is true, at the outbreak of the war, voices raised in England in warning of the dangers of association with the Russian autocracy, and there are, as we know, protests and warnings still being uttered. For the most part, how-

ever, they no longer represent bodies of opinion, but are left as merely voices crying in the wilderness. We may inquire to what this transformation from utter mistrust to whole-hearted friendship is due. Three or four causes are probably mainly responsible. First, the fact that the avowedly liberal French Republic was foremost and constant in alliance with Russia, seemed to show that constitutional England had little to fear for her own liberties. Again, the growing acquaintance of Western readers with Russian literature and art showed them that, contrasted with the conservative elements of the bureaucracy, was a widespread and sympathetic liberal tendency among the Russian people. The Russian entente could no longer be objected to on principle. Again, the knowledge that Russia, like ourselves, was an enemy of Germany, was enough to make critics still further reconsider their prejudices. Since the outbreak of the war, the magnificent efforts made by Russia against great odds to take her share in the war have impressed with spectacular effect the imagination of Western Europe. We have seen the heroic stubborn-

ness with which she has faced a better prepared and better equipped foe along an open European front of many hundred miles. Just as we write this chapter the news has arrived of a fresh advance in Asia Minor, and a further advance on the Persian front, which draws attention once again to the number and variety of fronts Russia has been called upon to maintain at one time. Not less obvious have been the attempts of the Russian people to reorganise their internal affairs for the more able conduct of the war. Few Englishmen have as yet any realisation of the gigantic odds our allies have had to face at home. They found themselves, at the outbreak of the war, hampered by a system of government which owed much of its prestige to German sympathy and support. The Germans had taken advantage of this to exploit the artificial inertia of the people and to honeycomb the political and military administration of Russia with spies and traitors. Ever since the first day of the war Russian patriots have been searching out and removing these sources of weakness. Not Liberals alone have taken part in the reforms, but all parties, with the

sole exception of the traitorous and often influential German agents that are still undiscovered, and the extreme Chauvinists who, like the extreme Radicals of the west, would rather see Germany victorious than any readjustment of their own prejudices. English popular opinion was particularly struck by one manifestation of Russian energy. The sale, at first of vodka and later of all intoxicating drinks, has been prohibited. But this reform (if it be one at all, since officers are expressly excluded from its operation, and such prohibitions have evil by-effects) is trifling compared with the reorganisation which has taken place in other departments of Russian life. It was, however, one that could be published abroad without any excuses for previous negligence, and has especially captivated foreign observers.

The conscientious endeavours of Russia, indeed, both until and after the outbreak of the war, to take her place as a Western and a world Power have, slowly at first but rapidly now, transformed the half-fearful half-disdainful disapproval of Western Europe into whole-hearted and even reckless support. It is to focus this

new enthusiasm upon the essential problem of Russia that this book has been written. We have shown in the foregoing pages that the characteristic feature of the Russia of the past has been her immurement within what has been called the Siberia of Europe. Land-locked within this vast prison, at whose gates from the beginning have stood foreigners and enemies, Russia has gnawed her own heart at the same time that she has been a continuous menace to her gaolers. While she has been driven to leave untouched or, at least bad, to misapply her mighty resources of character, language and material wealth, she has been accused, by her gaolers principally, of all kinds of subtle and sinister designs. Yet, as we have tried to show, her aim all the while has been no more unnatural than to break out of her prison.

It is not only the outside world, ignorant and apprehensive, which has suffered from Russia's immurement. Whatever phase of Russian life we regard, we find that the melancholy of this solitary confinement has left its mark. We have instanced at length the effect upon Russian literature, the most delicate and

accurate index of the mind of a nation; the melancholy of Russian literature is a byword in the world. And other modes of natural expression show it in an equal degree, if perhaps more obscured from the general eye. Manners and customs, commerce, enterprise of every kind, religion and, above all, government are seen to be under this dead hand, or, at any rate, to come under its influence sooner or later in their development. Arrested growth is to be seen everywhere; and the only solution, it would seem, of the difficult problem of the Hamlet of the nations is liberty, free air, communication with the world—a free and a sure port!

It is too soon yet to speak with any confidence of the outcome of the war, but one thing may be said with every assurance. If the present war does not mean for Russia that the occupation of the Dardanelles is taken out of the hands of her enemies, then, so far as Russia is concerned, the war will have been fought in vain. Moreover, unless we are to assume without warrant that a great nation can be imprisoned for ever, sooner or later, if the

Dardanelles are not made Russian by this war, the war will have to be fought again. For it was not the problem of the settlement of Belgium and Western Europe which drew Russia into the war, to take her vast share in the task of bringing the Central Powers under European control; but that she herself might, at long last, finally obtain that Eastern European passage into the world which is her right as well as her duty. Either Russia must cease to exist as an independent nation, and we know that Germany in this case will take control of her, or she must obtain the Dardanelles now. The stagnation of Russia has been dispersed for ever by the whirlpool of the war, and we can no longer pretend that she is to be comfortably settled in the same position as before. If we do not aid her to obtain the Dardanelles and make this an essential and inevitable condition of peace, Russia will either turn her back on Europe altogether or enter it in alliance with Germany.

As for Russia turning her back on Europe, improbable and fanciful as this may be, it is equally undesirable. It must not be forgotten that, if Russia needs the world, the world needs

Russia. No one in these days of fierce exploitation of all the natural resources of the world can contemplate calmly the continued locking up of the riches of the Russian Empire. As things are, Russia must appear to play the part of the dog in the manger, unable or unwilling to turn her resources to account herself and equally unwilling to allow her neighbours to do this for her. But European Russia alone, it must be remembered, is larger than the whole of the rest of the continent, while the Russian Empire comprises a sixth of the entire habitable surface of the globe. It is inconceivable that this vast potential treasure is to be left unused in an era when elsewhere every rood of land is being dug to yield its fruit. For the sake of the world Russia must be brought to contribute its share. And since by forcible occupation or by financial exploitation this is impossible—her army being too powerful to allow the first and her Chauvinists too numerous to permit the second—the only alternative, if we do not wish to see an alliance with Germany, is to allow her to exploit herself by means of a Russian port.

Two series of objections will be raised against the proposal to allow Russia to dispossess Turkey of the Dardanelles. Turkey and the romantic pro-Turks scattered over the world will repeat the reply that was given to the envoys of Peter the Great at Constantinople. "The Ottoman Porte," said the Turks, "guards the Black Sea as a pure and undefiled virgin whom no one dares to touch, and the Sultan will sooner permit strangers to enter his harem than consent to the sailing of foreign vessels on the Black Sea." The obvious objection to this is that the Sultan should not attempt to establish rights of harem over a sea-way so important to European development as the Black Sea. That he then claimed the whole, and his successors now only the outlet, does not diminish the absurdity of the Turkish claim to possession. The sounder claim that is put forward on behalf of the Turks is that, taking into consideration the enormous value of the possession of Constantinople to any of the major Powers, it is best left in the not dangerous care of a small neutral nation, in this case, of Turkey. As we have seen, however,

during the present war, no small nation nowadays can be depended upon to uphold its neutrality when sufficient pressure and inducement are held out to it. Turkey itself has gone over actively to the side of Germany, although the integrity of its European possessions was guaranteed in the event of its remaining neutral.

It is sometimes objected that the dispossession of Turkey would be a serious affront to the many Moslems under British rule. But this fear, we think, is exaggerated. First, it is the experience of the present writer that in the East, except in such curiously situated communities as the British dependencies in the Straits Settlements, the fate of Turkey is not regarded with such sentimental interest as these objectors suppose. In Egypt, for instance, while the Nationalists have always been prepared to use Turkish support and sympathy, they have never had any desire to re-establish Turkish supremacy. Turkey, in fact, is not very popular in Egypt. In India, so occupied are the Mahomedan Nationalists with their own Indian problems, that it is safe to say that Turkey is never thought of from one year's end

to another. Secondly, we are not discussing the fate of Turkey, but only its dispossession of an important strategic fortress. While, needless to say, any designs upon Mecca would rouse the Moslem world against their authors, what ground in reason is there for thinking that an intelligent Mahomedan would observe any racial or religious question involved in the question of the possession of Constantinople? We suggest that to suppose such a thing is to impute to Indian and Egyptian Mahomedans an incredible and blind fanaticism; in fact, the whole objection bears the stamp of partisan exaggeration, or of ignorance.

The suggestion that the Dardanelles should be handed over completely to Russia is likely to meet with determined opposition from many Englishmen; and rightly, as we think. They will object that, though in the present war with the Central Powers, our solidarity with Russia is whole-hearted and flawless, we are not able to associate ourselves with her as if we were joined for ever in a dual empire. England must remember her own affairs. We have seen that, in Persia, Russia and England were

obliged mutually to define their spheres of control, and we must apply the same healthy vigilance in all other portions of the globe. The retention of the Suez Canal is essential to our Indian Empire. If Russia were in complete possession of the Dardanelles, she would inevitably have to establish a certain suzerainty over the hinterland. Otherwise her control of the straits would not be more than temporary, since they might be blockaded by land at any moment. But this control of parts of Asia Minor would be a constant threat to the Suez Canal, and we should be compelled also to fortify the district and to establish active spheres of influence. Not only this, but in the event of war, Russian battleships could use the Black Sea simply as a huge harbour, mining the Dardanelles and sallying out at pleasure. It is not necessary that such a war should be with England; in any case we find that Russia has been given an advantage which renders almost impossible the retention of the balance of power. Russia would be too powerful altogether.

The Englishmen who, on these grounds,

oppose the Russian control of the Dardanelles are forced to admit that to leave the outlet in alien hands offers just as great a menace to England. Not only, as we see, would this throw Russia finally into the arms of Germany and thus enormously strengthen the latter's power and pretensions to the hegemony of Europe, but, in still more immediate ways, we should feel the effects. Denied her natural outlet, Russia would be for ever looking round for other ways out into the sea. She would attempt, perhaps, to re-establish a trade route across Asia Minor by railway, or to do the same, as she has tried before, in the Balkans. In either case she would attempt to assure the security of the route by acquiring predominant influence in the neighbourhoods through which it passed. Or she might attempt once more to find a path to the Persian Gulf, a desperate escapade which would need the definite conquest of Persia and thus present a permanent menace to English influence there and throughout the East. In fact, Russia without the Dardanelles presents almost as many dangers to England as her possession of the Darda-

nelles. Is there no middle way, a way which will satisfy Russia's need and at the same time not finally upset the balance of power in Europe? There is, we think, one such course, and we take leave to state it briefly.

Is the neutralisation of the Dardanelles impossible? We know the objections that are certain to be raised. First, from the Russian point of view, it will be objected that, as the whole Russian problem has been seen to hinge not on the impossibility, but on the insecurity, of passage through the Dardanelles, the most real and permanent security would have to be ensured to do away with all the evils that have made Russia the monster she is to-day. Will this international guarantee be really effective? Will it be permanent? These questions the Russian forces us to consider.

Western critics, on the other hand, will ask how this international guarantee is to be maintained; how an armed force is to be prevented from seizing the channel, and what provision there can be against a sudden capture of the straits by Russia in defiance of all treaties and guarantees.

Some of the objections on both sides really depend on the same fundamental questions. For example, it is not difficult to see that the Western fear that Russia may make a sudden descent on the straits, is intimately connected with the Russian doubt whether the passage of the Dardanelles will be permanently and certainly secure. If this last is sure, Russia would have nothing to gain by setting all the world by the ears to secure what was hers already. Russia did not do this before the war, when Turkey was internationally maintained by the Capitulations; is she likely, of all nations, to do so when the nations of the world are actually, and not merely nominally, guardians of the Dardanelles? In view of the extraordinary vulnerability and delicacy of her position, she would be cutting off her nose to spite her face. But the security of the straits from attack by others than Russia would determine this difficulty and the whole of the problem. If Bulgaria, say, or Turkey, of the smaller nations, or Italy or Austria, of the greater, could still be in a position to

close the Dardanelles, all connections between Russia and the world would be fatally endangered. It is only a matter of closing, not of actually holding, the Dardanelles, with which we have to deal; we see that Turkey, while she used to complain that the Capitulations had stolen her control, was still able to disorganise all Russian life by simply fortifying and mining the channel.

This is indeed the essential point. Surely an international treaty can be so clearly drawn up, and the responsibility for its maintenance so widely apportioned among all the great Powers, that the neutrality of the Dardanelles is guaranteed in all possible conditions of war and peace. The collection or preparation of military machines and stores must be utterly prohibited within a wide neutral area, and the straits themselves and a certain portion of the seas at either end must be treated as neutral waters. The system of the Capitulations, more carefully developed and extended along the shores and waters of the straits, might be the most satisfactory method of embodying inter-

national control. Constantinople must become the Shanghai of Europe.

We think this suggestion will bear any criticism that can be made, and we plead for a thorough examination of it in the firm persuasion that Russia's position at the close of the war will be a determinant factor in the future of all Europe. She stands now at the cross-roads. She may be denied the security of the Dardanelles, and this can lead to nothing but an alliance with the Central Powers. For the world at large, this means the superiority of these above any other possible combination of powers. Again, Russia will be developed for her allies first, and for the world afterwards. For Russia herself this road means the culmination of humiliation and madness; for France and England, it is the loss of all we have aimed at in this war and a certain prospect of German hegemony in Europe.

But if Russia obtains the secure passage of the Dardanelles by such an internationally guaranteed neutrality as has been suggested, there will be for the world at large, first the

permanent check of German world-ambitions, and, as well, the willing development of Russia's riches. For Russia it will be freedom at last, a place in Europe, and the revival of its national life, so long asleep that death would not be worse.

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